

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

VOICES IN DISCOURSE:  
RE-THINKING SHARED MEANING IN ACADEMIC WRITING

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of the requirements for the Degree of

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by

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## ABSTRACT

As a teacher of academic literacy, the researcher is involved in initiating non-traditional students into academic language practices--the academic 'conversation'. This study approaches mediation in a way that takes student diversity into account. This is done through an exploration of the relationship between the biographies of speakers of English as an additional language and their experience of writing academic essays in the faculties of Arts and Social Science at the University of Cape Town.

In order to explore this relationship, the research draws on ethnographic methodology, and takes place in different locations. The first is in the curriculum in the form of a discourse analysis of an assignment which required personal writing in an introductory course to English I. The focus is on meaning exchange in context (discourse). The second involves biographical interviews with 13 students on the same course. Here the focus is on the transitions in their lives, and on their views on academic writing and identity. The emphasis is on the voice of the individual. The third area involves bringing voice and discourse together in interviews with three students about their assignments on the introductory course. Students were asked about the influences visible in the linguistic surface of their writing.

The study concludes that if the academic conversation is to be open to a full exchange of meaning which includes the participation of voices traditionally excluded, there need to be new ways of thinking about discourse while emphasising the importance of voice and agency. The consequences of this are examined in three areas: a) research, b) research-as-curriculum and c) curriculum in the areas of task design, referencing and evaluation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ENTERING

*"It's torture. You have to fully attach yourself "*

*"Writing and acting go together "*

*"It's very structured - but not for me."*

*"We were arguing about the advantages and disadvantages of learning English and losing your own language."*

*"Your vocabulary expands - it enables you to think, you must think."*

These comments came from a group of students discussing writing at university. All are "second language" students, speakers of English as an additional language. The transition to university requires them, as students in the Arts and Social Sciences, to enter a new learning context which involves learning the conventions of writing an academic essay.

Although there are differences across disciplines, there is a common essay form, characterised by features such as referencing, limitations on the use of the personal pronoun 'I' (other than as an organiser of text) and the acceptability of only certain forms of evidence.

This form of writing, shaped by a culture that is remote from most people, is new to the majority of students entering university. To students such as the University of Cape Town (UCT) first years quoted above, the transition is particularly marked because it is accompanied by a change to English as medium of instruction. It also follows a schooling experience which, for most black South Africans, has been inferior by design. This combination of language and schooling etched into class and race throws the uneven transitions into relief.

The students' comments convey this sense of transition, and also the gains and losses involved in this process of exposure to a new literacy form. But they are also strikingly different, from "It's torture..." to "Your vocabulary expands...". As the domination of the apartheid past alters and loosens, and we begin the difficult process of reconstruction, I think that it is essential to open the categories we have used to organise experience at universities - 'second language', 'disadvantaged', 'mainstream' - and look again at who our students are.

This research is an attempt to reach a better understanding of this diversity and how it affects students' writing. As a language teacher at UCT, my work has involved initiating students into academic discourse - the pattern of language in the education process at universities. I have tried to find a balance between what students bring with them and what the new language context demands. The new discourse generates frequent questions such as 'but what do I do with my *own* ideas?'. At the same time, when students have the space to write more freely and openly, their writing is often more substantial and rooted. This suggests a wealth of other literacy experiences hovering just outside the borders of the academic conversation. We have explored these other language acquisition experiences and how they are affected by the institutional context (Angelil-Carter and Thesen 1993).

While there is a growing understanding among language practitioners at the tertiary level of the demands that the new environment makes on second language learners in particular (see for example Murray 1993), our knowledge of how previous experience affects learning in the new context is undeveloped. This research attempts to illuminate the point at which individual histories meet the common language of a particular context, exemplified in the essay text form.

In order to research this relationship, I have chosen to work in two places: one, inside the formal curriculum focusing on an assignment in a first year course; the other, outside the curriculum, interviewing students about their individual biographies.

These choices reflect my interest in the relationship between the constraints of the prefigured language of the educational process at universities, ie academic discourse, and the individual's contact with this system.

To reflect the tense, unfinished relationship between the structure of language and the individuals who move through the prefigured language, I use two key concepts. One is discourse. Like Halliday and Hasan (1985), Gee (1991) and Clarence (1992), I use the term 'discourse' to mean more than a connected stretch of language that makes sense: it includes a close relationship between text and context. Halliday and Hasan draw the useful distinction between text (what is said or written) and con-text (the total environment in which the text unfolds).

The second concept is voice which I use for thinking about the individual and diversity within the institutional setting (Ellsworth 1989 and Rudduck 1993). I also use the term in a linguistic sense (Cazden 1992) in that the presence of the individual writer, and her history and future, may (or may not) be visible in the language surface of her writing.

So while discourse is about conventions, appropriacy, common language, constraints and structure, voice is a way of thinking about diversity, individual signature, history, movement and agency.

### The research setting

The setting for this investigation is the Introduction to English course (ELLIO3S) in the English department at UCT. It is a second semester course taken by predominantly black, speakers of English as an additional language, intending to register for English I. In 1993, 150 students enrolled on the course, a considerable increase on the previous year's numbers.

My own involvement with the course began in 1992, when I joined two other English department lecturers to form the teaching team for the language course within ELLIO3S. (There are two other strands, literature and poetry: students attend all three). For some years now the course has drawn on 'Critical Language Awareness' (CLA) theory.' This involves engagement with text and context in different registers, for example advertising and journalistic writing. The course emphasises aspects such as how text is structured, whose interests are served, and what underlying attitudes are conveyed towards the topic, the writer/speaker, and listener/reader.

But we felt that our teaching had stopped short at the point of applying critical language practice to academic writing. We were concerned that our students might be able to position themselves with regard to language, particularly outside of the university as readers, when their immediate need is to engage and produce their own robust academic writing.

Two teachers on the course, Mary Bock and Lynn Hewlett, reflect on the course in a recent publication. They identify several problems with the way the course approached the relationship between CLA and academic discourse. They write:

As this course represents 'materials in progress', the approach to academic discourse is an area in which further study could be usefully undertaken (1993:82).

1. There is a burgeoning literature on CLA theory. The collection edited by Fairclough (1992a) provides an excellent topical introduction. James and Garrett (ed) (1991) deal with the broader domain of 'language awareness' to whose 'natural' approach to language variety the CLA orientation is in part a reaction.

My research began when I took up the materials design for a unit on CLA and academic discourse the following year. I wanted to find a way of teaching academic discourse which would 'de-naturalise' it and make it less intimidating.

During the year my own theoretical interests changed. I felt that the CLA approach was useful for the analysis of the relationship between language and power, what inks (in Young 1993) calls "the politics of meaning". But I thought that it assumed too much about how groups of people (for example, 'disadvantaged' students) are positioned by language, as defined by those who are outside of this positioning (ie teachers). I felt that we were not paying enough attention to the issue of diversity among our students, and I saw voice as a construct for exploring this difference. I wanted to examine the balance between discourse and voice in a way which would ultimately expand my approach to teaching academic writing.

Materials for the Introduction li course.

Early this year, I spoke to one of the ELLIO3S lecturers about the possibility of designing materials to improve on the way we had taught academic discourse the previous year. She welcomed this suggestion, pleased that the course would stimulate research.

My intention was to design a series of lessons to lead to an essay task which would require students to both generate and analyse writing in two different registers. I drew on the suggestions of Stubbs (1990) and Serpell (1989), that study of language variation and varieties enables students to move consciously through the different language contexts that we are all required to adjust to in contemporary social life\_what Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) call 'border-crossing'. In so doing, my aim was to encourage students to befriend and appropriate academic discourse through increased awareness of what it is, what it does well and what its limitations are. This kind of teaching could lead to greater confidence, flexibility and creativity with a particularly powerful form of "the given language" (Eco 1986), which constrains us through its already formulated stereotypes.

Given the problems I had heard students express about the place of their own thinking in academic knowledge construction, I decided to approach academic discourse through examining how writers make themselves visible in academic writing. The distinction between personal and impersonal styles seemed to follow logically from this focus. I hoped that the materials would shift students from what I perceived to be a distant and alienated attitude to writing, to a point where they could 'recognise themselves', to borrow Ndebele's term (1987:13), through it.



I was given three double periods (each an hour and a half long) to design. The lessons concluded with an assignment, the final one for the semester.

Selections from the materials used in the three lessons preceding the assignment are appended (Appendix A). I shall briefly outline the focus of each session before describing the assignment itself.

### Lesson 1

Using the university environment as the starting point, students selected texts from a range of different contexts, for example, departmental and cafeteria noticeboards. These were brought to class and analysed using a framework<sup>2</sup> that was familiar by this stage. Examples of texts selected included a memorandum from the vice-chancellor urging the university community to join in the September 'Peace campaign' activities; a section from a Students Representative Council publication on the 'education crisis', various posters advertising social and cultural activities on campus, and official notices from university service organisations.

### Lesson 2

Our focus narrowed to academic writing as a form of university discourse. Two samples of writing on the same topic were analysed. The first was a text written by a first-year student in response to a task which involved writing personally on her understanding of culture. We referred to this as the text of an 'apprentice' to academic writing. The other was written by the cultural theorist Raymond Williams, an 'expert', on the problem of defining culture in the Social Sciences. Both were written for academic audiences, but in different contexts, resulting in different language choices. Students then selected one of the authors and wrote a personal response to their texts. We encouraged students to experiment with different styles of writing, but at the same time to link this to careful assessments of lecturers' expectations on different courses.

### Lesson 3

This session involved further analysis of writers' styles, this time looking at positions along a continuum between the two extreme 'apprentice' and 'expert' positions of the previous lesson. Students also tried to locate their own writing on this continuum. The task included justifying

2. Bock and Hewlett (1993) describe the framework in some detail. It includes Jakobson's analysis of the communicative situation, linked to Halliday's social semiotic perspective, with the added critical dimension of Janks and Iwanic.

or defending decisions on the basis of language in *the* text. This is the kind of analysis required by the English Department.

The assignment.

Because the essay which I used as my academic discourse sample was a key source of data for my research, I give it fuller attention. This is the task:

### Assignments \_3

This assignment involves three short texts: two written in different register (a and b), and (c) a commentary on the difference between the two.

For (a) and (b), identify the audience for *whom you are writing*. Be *as* specific as possible.

(a) *Write a personal account of your experience of the English language at UCT.*

(b) *Tollefson argues that access to English strongly influences educational opportunity. Summarise his argument.*

(c) *Write a carefully structured comparison between your two texts, analysing the differences in context, and how these differences are expressed through the language choices you have made. Use examples from each text to illustrate your points.*

Each section should be approximately one page in length.

**DOB: Group A: 5 October**  
**Group B: 6 October**

The question guiding my research was:

- **What is the relationship between students' individual biographies and their writing of academic discourse?**

Underlying this broad question were the following more specific ones, with each question forming the nucleus of a chapter.

- \* Do students write differently in the personal, 'I-mode'? (Chapter Three : Discourse);
- \* How do they describe their own experiences? (Chapter Four : Voice);
- \* Are these experiences evident in their writing? (Chapter Five Voices in Discourse).

### The structure of this dissertation

As will become clear in the methodology chapter, the research approach I adopted was "inquiry-guided" (Mischler 1990) in that there is a dynamic interplay between theory, method and findings in the course of the research. A more traditional research approach involving a separation of theory, data and interpretation, would not have matched the process I worked through. The core of this thesis is structured in accordance with what have come to be the main themes in this research: the given language of academic writing (discourse), and the insertion of the individual voice within it, are separated (Chapters Three and Four) and then united in Chapter Five. At each stage, theory, observation and interpretations shape and re-shape one another. The conclusion is concerned with reconstruction and implications for research and curriculum.

This dissertation also represents a process. I began with an understanding that there is a clear separation between discourse as structured and voice as mobile. This changed in the course of the research. Something of that narrative is conveyed in the structure.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

#### **stand ..**

My research interest is in the relationships between the hard-edged necessity of writing essays and the subjectivities and perceptions of student writers, whose voices are not often heard.

Choosing an appropriate methodological framework in which to do this has been a complex task. An examination of research literature reveals a field of shifting definitions; the historical ebb and flow of different paradigms, splitting into further paradigms, has left me with a sense that the ground will shift under me. Yet that seems appropriate. An attempt such as this to create space where our understanding of the teaching of writing may be differently understood because others, traditionally excluded, have been drawn into the process, must unsettle understandings.

It is generally acknowledged that methodological choices are influenced by the research question. For example, both Yin (1984) and Vulliamy (1990) make the point that the relative appropriateness of different approaches depends on the nature of the research question. But both writers stress that some research questions lend themselves to combinations and choices. But the question itself, one's particular way of asking, is shaped by personal preference. I am curious about other people's stories, enjoy uncertain paths, and reading texts to discover the authors behind them. This draws me to ethnographic inquiry.

To clarify my position, I need to define what I mean by the terms paradigm, methodology and method.

The meaning I choose for **paradigm** is borrowed from Maguire and is deceptively simple: "A paradigm provides a 'place to stand' from which to view reality" (1987:10). It suggests that paradigm is a perspective, and therefore a choice that one makes. I think that distinctions between paradigms are real and useful. In education two people may look at the same situation from two different places, and see very different realities. With this choice will be a pattern of associated ways through research that have different outcomes. But these patterns of choice are not determined or fixed. They are socially constructed. Yet they are real in that they result in different actions.

An important dimension of paradigm is epistemology--an approach to understanding knowledge. This is obviously central to research in education, and is the link between

paradigmatic perspectives and methodology. I see methodology as the epistemic dimension put to work in research. So paradigm and methodology are closely linked. The terms are used interchangeably by some writers (for example, Maguire and Vulliamy).

Methods are research techniques, such as interviews or questionnaires. Vulliamy gives an excellent summary of the debate about the relationships between paradigm, methodology and method by outlining the way in which the use of the terms 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' has been misleading. They have come to be used as 'handles' for both the contrasting paradigms and the methods associated with them.

The widespread debate as to the relative merits of quantitative vs qualitative approaches...has generally been confused by a failure to differentiate considerations of epistemology from techniques of data collection and analysis (1990:9).

Thus for instance quantitative methods are often equated with a positivist paradigm or worldview, making method synonymous with methodology.

With this distinction it is possible to think about research choices along a continuum in terms of the relationship between epistemology and research techniques. Vulliamy outlines different positions, favouring a middle one, which suggests that one can usefully mix methods without being restricted by paradigms, creating a "paradigm of choices" (Patton in Vulliamy 1990:10). Arguments for a looser relationship between epistemology and method are growing in popularity. Smaling (1992) for instance is persuasive that pragmatic as well as paradigmatic factors influence the researcher's choice of appropriate method. Like Maguire, he too sees paradigm as a perspective, or 'ideal typical construction'; as social constructions, the boundaries between them must be fluid rather than mutually exclusive.

Having outlined broad distinctions between three levels of looking, I make my own position clear. My own 'place to stand' is closer to an interpretive rather than a positivist orientation. The difference between the two hinges on the epistemological question about how knowledge is perceived in the relationship between researcher and researched.

Positivist research tends to regard people and their actions as objects in the natural world subject to laws of science; to use Cameron et al's sharply simple distinction (1992), it is research on people, while an interpretive approach could be described as research with people.

1. For fuller accounts of this division in approaches to research see Cohen and Manion (1985) and Maguire (1987) Other writers such as Guba (1990) draw additional distinctions, identifying four paradigms, rather than the traditional binary distinction that I have used above.

It recognises from the outset that people interpret their own situations and give meaning to them in different ways.

Related to different approaches to 'the subject' is the issue of competing interpretations of meaning. The interpretive approach, which regards human actions and institutions as 'social constructs', would stress that there is no one, fixed meaning; it is always multiple, depending on perspective, who is speaking at what time, and who is listening. This is fundamental to my research. There will be multiple perspectives on the nature and meaning of writing.

However, I do not hold an endlessly relative position. Within the interpretive perspective, Cameron et al (1992) make a useful distinction between relativist and realist positions. Relativist approaches such as phenomenology and deconstruction give great explanatory power to individual 'subjects'. The criticism of this position is well expressed by Cameron et al:

Social reality may be a human product, but it faces humans like a coercive force (1992:9).

The realist position is located between the researched and the researcher, accepting the "theory-ladenness of observation, but not the theory dependent nature of reality itself" (1992:10).

My own position is closer to the realist one, which suits my interest in taking a second look (through the biographical interviews) but linking this to a real task (writing an essay). I would like to think of research as a constant movement from deconstruction, to reconstruction, and back again.

I think this realist position is present in a stance that Cherryholmes (1988) calls "critical pragmatism" which balances the realism of starting with what is in place, with acknowledging the relativism that anything new will be in relation to what is already there. He stresses that this kind of dual focus needs to be informed by "a sense of crisis". He quotes Putnam as capturing the essence of critical pragmatism in this statement:

There are two points that must be balanced: 1) talk of what is 'right' and 'wrong' in any area only make sense against the background of an inherited tradition, but 2) traditions themselves can be criticised (Putnam in Cherryholmes 1988:184).

This stance is shared by Popkewitz who suggests an approach to studying the relationship between culture and control in schools which is characterised by "trust with skepticism" (1988:90).

This is the epistemic context for my research: it is an eclectic position. I take a critical, yet pragmatic stance, acknowledging the importance of social construction.

### Methodology

These epistemic interests have lead me towards an ethnographically-oriented approach to research. I use the term tentatively because it is not a full ethnographic study in the anthropological sense, with its deep immersion in cultural issues, particularly the close observation of the relationship between language and context. It is more like a short cut to ethnography. It is ethnographic in that my interest is in linking language to cultural interpretation - both the culture of the university (with which I am very familiar) and of other contexts of language acquisition that influence learners (about which I know very little.)

My choice of methodology and methods was influenced by Hymes. He writes:

A general theory of the intersection of language and social life must encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning. The relationship within a particular community or personal repertoire are an empirical problem calling for a mode of analysis that is jointly ethnographic and linguistic, conceiving ways of speaking as one of the communities set of symbolic forms (1977:31). <sup>2</sup>

Substitute 'writing' for 'speaking'. There is a dual "mode of analysis" at work in this research: focus on an event in the institution, the writing of an essay (ie linguistic), and attempts to reach a better understanding of who the writers are and what their choices mean (ethnographic).

An ethnographic orientation means an emphasis on holistic cultural analysis, and on the researcher as a key 'instrument' in the research process (Johnson 1992). The researcher also becomes something of a narrator. Geertz (1988) gives a superb analysis of the place of the ethnographer as author, trying to find a balance between 'author-saturated' and 'author-evacuated' writing. This emphasis on how one tells the story of the research places a burden of responsibility on the researcher to ensure that the work has theoretical depth and resonance.

2.1 have found Hymes' analysis illuminating. He is seen as not dealing with issues of power and language. Yet this quote seems to point eloquently in that direction:

If linguistics is to realise its potential for the well-being of mankind, it must consider speech communities as comprising not only rules, but also sometimes oppression, sometimes freedom, in the relations between personal abilities and their occasions of use (1977:205).

In a rare example of criticism from the inside, Atkinson and Delamont argue that research in this tradition, particularly the 'case study' approach, suffers from a lack of "methodological self-awareness" (1985:33). They suggest that one way round this is to develop formal categories of analysis, what they call 'generic analytic categories', to make the study more powerful and generalisable. I have attempted to do so in working with abstract categories such as discourse and voice, which are linguistic representations of fundamental tensions between structure and agency in social life.

In a slightly different interpretation of the term ethnographic, Cherryholmes uses the term to refer to a process that involves a shift in power from researchers to "subjects who were formerly silent as objects." He says:

...power to enunciate, select categories, make arguments, choose metaphors and propose explanations shifts a bit from researchers to subjects, from the research literature to understandings of people in the world, from academic specialities (such as measurement and statistical analysis) to tacit understandings (1988:110).

This choice to draw strongly on what students say about their own lives and the choices they have made in their writing raises two methodological issues. One is the problem of validity with interpretive research, and the other, common to all research practice, is ethics.

### Validation

I prefer to use the term validation rather than 'validity' with its connotations of process and discourse construction (Mischler 1990). If one sees reality largely as a social construct, then as researcher I have to construct the reality of this research by making it persuasive. By doing so, I am bound to come to terms with a key issue in research, the 'observer paradox'. I do so in a different way than if I had worked in a positivist framework. Using a scientific example, it is rather like the 'error of parallax' where the calibration (or 'reading') you see on the glass container is distorted by the glass separating the phenomenon from the observer, and this has to be accounted for. In this case, it is language which distorts, coming to life at the point of consumption, through the act of reading. So the trustworthiness rather than the truth of the research is the issue.

I have considered validation in the following ways: accounts of students' lives have truth value whether one believes each word, or regards the narratives as a 'distortion' induced by the interview. As Mischler writes,



Distortion is not a weakness but rather a hallmark of interpretive research in which the key problem is how individuals interpret events and experiences, rather than assessing whether or not their interpretations correspond to or mirror the researcher's construct of 'objective reality' (1990:427).

My view is that any story will be a selection. The same applies to the essays I have selected. I have chosen according to what I think illuminates the issues I am interested in. They are part of my argument, which takes place in a context.

A second kind of validation is to open the process I have been through as much as possible within the constraints.[ attempt to make as much of the interview texture available and to represent again through different lenses where appropriate.

Drawing on Maxwell (1992) I have also used 'quasi-statistical' support for my argument. This is a form of descriptive validity that requires little or no inference, and is usually associated with quantitative analysis.

Acknowledging that the interview gives a partial account, I have drawn on other opportunities for interaction with students to second my interpretations. I have also attempted to describe the context as much as possible in analysing both interviews and essays.

Ethics and 'empowerment'

I wanted this research to be as participatory as possible. As I see it, there are two major sets of exchanges in educational research: the first involves the relationship between researcher and subject (usually students) and the second, the exchange with peers via the text as product, reading, publication etc. The first is often not really an exchange at all; 'mining' would be a better metaphor. The often stark taking of information leaves very little in exchange for the student. I wanted to take the complex power relations, what Cameron et al call the "mosaic of power potentials" (1992:13), into account from the outset.

I took my guidelines from their summary of issues for 'empowering' research. They recommend that:

- 1) interactive methods be used as much as possible,
- 2) subjects' own agendas should be addressed, and

3) feedback and sharing of knowledge should form part of the process.

I attempted to do all three, with differing degrees of success. With voice an important construct in my research, I wanted participation to be a positive experience, and for students to come away with something as a result of having taken part.

### Method

The ethnographic orientation of this research is carried through in the choice of methods. This is most strongly represented in the biographical interviews, in which the researcher as biographer attempts to "see the world through the subject's frame of reference" as Campbell suggests. He draws on Schutz's view that reality begins with the "unique biographical situation" (1988:65).

Based on Hymes' ethnography of communication, the primary methods used were:

- 1) semi-structured biographical interviews with 13 students, tape recorded.
- 2) a sample text analysis of 2 essays written in the ELLIO3S course.
- 3) recorded interviews with three selected students based on an analysis of their writing.
- 4) a research journal was used to keep a record of observations from the classroom, discussions with colleagues, meetings which were not tape-recorded, and for noting my impressions and reflections as the research progressed.

A fuller description of the methods appear below where the context of each technique is made clearer.

### Section 2: Stages in the Research

In this section, the process of the research is outlined. Each stage includes a critical commentary.

### L. Arranging access

#### i) Access to the course

The entry to this research was provided for me by my link with UCT's 'Introduction to English' course. As I began to identify my research focus, I approached one of the teachers. The previous year we had recognised the need to develop an approach to academic discourse. I expressed interest in designing materials for this purpose. Access was made easier by the collaborative work ethic shared by teachers on the course. In addition, I knew the context well and had worked with members of the team before.

The process of designing the materials and getting other teachers to work with them was delicate. I did not want to be doing all the teaching, as this would divert me from the participant observer status I wanted to achieve in the classroom. I presented outlines of the materials to the other teachers, who then gave me feedback and I modified them accordingly.

*Comment: the most difficult aspect of this stage of the research was my uncertainty about roles. I was part teacher, researcher, participant observer and sometimes gave contradictory messages. This was complicated by the difference between my theoretical understandings and research interests and those of my colleagues, for whom I had a great deal of respect. I did not feel confident about airing my own understandings: it was not easy to voice my criticisms of our application of CLA theory. Because I was more concerned with students, perhaps I undervalued or underestimated the delicateness of the process of working with teachers; sharing understandings and clarifying roles takes time.*

#### ii) Access to students

The next step was to establish contact with students. A month before my materials were due to be used, I was introduced to one of the two classes (approximately 50 students) as the teacher/researcher who had designed the next set of lessons.

In this session, I explained why I was there by outlining my research. I reminded students of work they had done so far on register, examining the relationship between sender, audience and social context. I explained that in the course we would be using a CLA framework to understand language in the university.

I said that my research interest was in how to "teach academic register, while at the same time stressing that you don't have to abandon your own thoughts, ideas, expression to use the academic register confidently. I'm interested in how some students get to feel comfortable with the academic register, while others don't." I said that I would like a group of students to work with me in looking at this issue.

The next step was crucial. I told students why I thought participation might be worthwhile. I gave these reasons:

\*if you are interested in language,

\*if you are interested in this particular issue, ie befriending academic writing,

\*if you are interested in research. Where the research goes will in part be shaped by you,

\*and last but not least, if you want to earn some money! (Students were paid for group and individual interviews).

A group of sixteen students waited for me afterwards. I took their names down and we arranged to meet the following Monday at 3.30, a time that everyone had free as it was timetabled for the ELLIO3S course. Different personalities, motivations were apparent from the outset. Someone said, "I just need the money" followed a little later by, Will we have to write? I *hate* writing." There were more volunteers than I had wanted, but I felt sure that some would drop out of the process.

*Comment: Having had no contact with students all year, this group of energetic, yet relaxed students and the certainty that an interesting process was about to unfold, excited me.*

*My decision to pay students was a difficult one. They reacted with amusement and disbelief to my announcement that I would pay them. I felt justified in paying students, since I was asking for a substantial commitment at a difficult time of year, with final exams not far away. Also, more pragmatically, I knew that I might not have any volunteers if there was no financial remuneration. We had no relationship of common interest at that point. And paying students to participate in research is standard practice at UCT.*

*Much later in the research process, when we met during 'swot week' to have lunch at my house (stage 6 below) and give feedback on initial analysis and pay students, my*

*decision to pay students was criticised. We were discussing my research process. Peter asked me why I had payed students.. He felt that this had skewed the interviews, and said that a researcher should be able to build a relationship of trust, and he had not had that with me in the beginning. Mkhululi countered that it had been in his mind at the beginning and then he forgot about it and got involved. And the money helped him to feel more committed, knowing that we would always meet at 3.30 on Mondays. Peter insisted that I should first have called for volunteers. Others felt that there was "money in everything".*

*This is typical of the ethical problems that one faces. I felt awkward about the money. And yet the issue itself became part of our exchange. We joked about how people deal with money in different cultures.*

*On reflection, I should have started working with a smaller group of students from the outset. In a dissertation of this size, I have not been able to do justice to these biographical interviews.*

## 2. Establishing a relationship through group meetings

Between the initial contact and the beginning of interviews, I arranged meetings in our established Monday 3.30 slot. The purpose of the first meeting was to establish terms for research, pay and meeting times. In addition, in the spirit of the guidelines for 'empowering' research, I wanted to explain my own interests and research methodology, as well as to find out what students' expectations were. Another important purpose was to begin to build a relationship with students that would make the individual interviews less awkward.

I learnt some technical lessons early on, discovering that the microphone on my tape recorder was not powerful enough to pick up voices in discussion. So instead, I passed the recorder round the group and asked people to speak into the microphone, saying what they hoped to get from the sessions.

Of the 16 students, several students said they were unclear, or still confused. Two wanted to improve their English, two gave altruistic motivations (Tumelo, an ex-teacher, wanted to "impart something, filter education to the community", while another wanted to "contribute something") while Bongani was quite clear: "I'm a businessman". Three wanted to understand more about research, someone wanted to keep his "mind busy". Peter said that he had just written his first novel (in Ndebele) and he wanted to "exploit ideas" and learn all he could about different languages and styles. Robert wanted to learn to feel more comfortable with groupwork and to understand others. (I return to this point at the end of this chapter.)

Students then asked me questions, about my biography, my research interests, where I wanted to "filter" my research, whether I was interested in tertiary education only. This led to a discussion of the relationship between language at school and at university, and then on to academic writing. Several students were fairly dominant. Some of the comments from this session are recorded in the opening section of this dissertation. Here are others:

*Its torture, [referring to writing] you have to punish yourself, depriving yourself the sweet time of sleeping, music, thinking over things. There's a framework and you cannot deviate. You have to fully attach yourself*

*English alone cannot address, cannot fully address, the way I feel.*

These strongly expressed comments confirmed the importance of the questions I was asking in the research. At the end of the session, we made arrangements to meet the following week.

*Comment: During this session, I experienced uncertainty about whether I was teaching or researching. Following the second guideline for empowerment research--addressing agendas-- was not easy. What about my agenda? I did not want to say too much which might influence what students said in the interviews. Yet it was also useful to hear what students said, to establish the space for them to introduce their own categories and understandings. It was also important to see how they identified themselves in groups. Voices and silences were evident from the beginning. The students' comments confirmed my interest in the area I had chosen to focus on.*

The second group session was a time-filler in that the start of my three classes had been postponed. This time there were fewer students--10, rather than 16. The buzz and humour of the first session was missing. Still struggling with the practicalities of recording, I tried out another microphone which also failed to pick up the conversation clearly. I ran the meeting in a teacherly way which I later regretted. First, they analysed a paragraph of academic writing as register looking for what made it typically academic (Appendix B). I also asked students to locate themselves relative to a point representing "good writing" in the centre of the page. This was followed by a discussion of writing in different disciplines.

*Comment: The reduction in numbers and general tiredness of the session could have been end of term exhaustion. It was also an unsettling time following tensions on the Wits campus which then spilled over to UCT. The following day there was a march on the administration building, which affected attendance in the ELLIO3S class. However, I also felt very uneasy about my handling of the session. Once again, the teacherliness of the session was a problem. There seemed to be a set response to situations. Both*

*students and I seemed to slip into role. We needed to get out of the classroom for the differences to emerge. I decided to start setting up individual interviews as soon as possible.*

### Stave 3: Biographical interviews

Over a period of just over a month, 13 students were interviewed. One interview had to be repeated because of technical problems with the initial one. All took place in empty classrooms in the Arts Block. They ranged in length from 40 minutes to an hour and a half. The interviews were semi-structured, the structure provided by the biographical nature of the interviews and the asking of the same question in all interviews (except for one, because I was so engrossed that I forgot to do so). Students were asked to locate themselves with reference to a rough sketch of a 'stream' representing academic writing (see Chapter Three).

The tone of the interviews varied dramatically. Some students were fairly guarded, and I was aware of having to think of questions. Others were remarkably spontaneous and candid. (A transcript of one of the more open interviews is in Appendix E).

I transcribed the interviews myself, initially in shorthand. Once I had selected sections, they were transcribed in full. I processed and coded the interviews in two different ways: 1) marking the sections that stood out and made an impact, either in their expression or particularity; and 2) looking for common themes, eg, school-university differences, social life, other influences/literacies (for example, politics, church). So I was looking for both what is common and what is unique. The approach to data involved 'constant comparison' and 'progressive focussing' (Ball, 1991).

*Comment: I underestimated the effort involved in transcribing interviews and listening for deeper meaning at the same time. I thought that by doing the transcribing myself, I would listen more carefully. I would have done better to have separated the two activities through having them transcribed by an outsider to the research, followed by me reading the transcripts and listening to the recordings simultaneously. I wonder, though, whether the knowledge that someone would hear and record in writing my own hesitant questioning would have inhibited me in the interview. I felt too inexperienced to be exposed in this way.*

*Another reason for having an outsider do the transcription is that I relied unconsciously on my own meaning-making strategies in doing the initial selection. I might have looked differently, and been more aware of the language students were using, if I had*

*separated transcription from interpretation. Initially, I was looking for the narrative and biography rather than how students made meaning, and how I in turn interpreted their experiences.*

*In general, I found the interviews deeply interesting and generative. It was often difficult to remain detached. At times I found myself sharing experiences or giving advice. Later, several students asked whether they could have personal copies of the recordings of the interviews.*

*Analysis of the interviews was complex, and still feels unfinished. I found decisions about what to leave out were loaded with implications - ethical and practical.*

#### 4. Analysis of essays

I immersed myself in the writing in the ELL103S course by offering to mark the bulk of the essays. The theme of the writing made the many layers for considering language come into sharp focus. Reading students express their struggles with the language in English itself, and having to 'mark' their writing seemed punitive. (I discuss this dilemma more fully in Chapter Three).

The decision to use Gee's (1990) version of discourse analysis, which sees writing as an attempt to resolve contradictions, emerged from my reading of so many essays, many of which were filled with ambivalence and a sense of the gains and losses of learning English. His way of analysing writing lent itself to the themes which seemed to underlie the writing.

#### 5. Interviews with writers about their essays

These follow-up interviews with three writers (Chapter Five) were conducted to explore the choices and influences in their writing.

In reality these interviews took place after the feedback lunch session (stage 6 below). They took place at my house during "swot week".

*Comment: Returning for second interviews from a different angle gave me the sense that relationships were being established. The feedback lunch had made us all more relaxed and this showed in the interviews. They also took place outside the formal learning environment (in my home) and there were new factors to 'manage' such as how social the interview/visit would be. With all three students, interesting discussions took place*



*on the margins of the interview. Carol spoke about conversations she had overheard on the taxi on the way, in which people were arguing about the ethnic conflict in the Tafelsig housing incident, and what 'coloured' voters would do in the forthcoming elections. There were also interesting impressions about voice: I was becoming familiar with students' characteristic speaking 'auras', yet also aware that students were not saying the things they had said in the original interviews. I am not sure whether to interpret these as attitude changes or evidence of the shifting nature of voice.*

*With the change in venue, I also perceived a subtle shift in power relations: students would see me in a different context. I felt more vulnerable and less protected by my role as teacher/researcher.* <sup>3</sup>

#### 6. Feedback and sharing of knowledge

In keeping with Cameron et al's recommendation that feedback be part of the process, I arranged a meeting to give a progress report on the research, and to ask students to read transcripts of interviews to see whether they still felt happy about their words appearing in print. I also needed to pay everyone before they left on holiday.

We decided to meet for lunch at my home. At that time, I had just analysed the interviews and outlined some of the difficulties I was having, for instance trying to decide how much to intervene, and how much to let voices speak for themselves. I also mentioned my difficulties with selection and themes. We discussed the latitude and openness of my research. (Tumelo used the word "wide" to describe this approach: I heard "white" which caused some amusement.) It seemed to contrast strongly with the constraints of their essay topics.

After this general discussion, I gave out copies of transcripts from interviews with two students, Mkhululi and Tumelo, so that students could see how spoken words converted into text for public consumption. The speakers were not identified. Another concern was with using students' actual words. I was worried that the verbatim accounts of second language speakers, however perceptive or metaphorically rich, would be undermined by hesitancy and lack of grammatical control exposed in the transcripts. Instead of empowerment, students would be weakened. I did not say this to students. Tumelo claimed his extract, saying that he would be

3. Students dressed differently for these off-campus sessions. For example, instead of wearing her trucker's cap and jeans, Carol arrived in dresses, wearing make-up. For my part, I found myself wondering what students thought of my domestic context, and was concerned that my dog would be perceived as 'racist'.

happy for anyone to read what he had said. Mkhululi, more quietly, said that it was fine if it was going to be useful for others to see. There was general agreement on this.

Peter then raised the point mentioned earlier, criticising the fact that I had payed students.

A group of students said they wanted to read what I had written once I had put everything together. With some amusement, we drew up two lists; one for those who wanted to be paid and the other for those who would read regardless of payment.

I was only able to show one student what I had written. I met Tumelo early in December, and asked him to choose a pseudonym which I would use in the research. I needed his input to make sure that it was a Sotho or Tswana name. He did not think that a pseudonym was necessary because he was proud of what he had said. He read a draft of Chapter Four, and was obviously very pleased. I think that he was reliving what he had said rather than following my argument.

*Comment: At about this time, my supervisor read the same chapter, and criticised the "loving" nature of my interpretation of Tumelo in particular. Was I taking the students' side to the extent that I had lost my critical ground? In an attempt to make what I said palatable to students, who at a particular point have the power to withhold permission for me to proceed, was I giving up no, independence? This point in the research was critical.*

*The issue seems to be how one keeps faith with students, while at the same time being intelligible to a wider peer community. In fact, the decisions I faced as researcher are very like the ones that students face in their writing—managing the relationship between voice and discourse. Dilemmas about whether to keep solidarity with students or with my peer group, reflected and amplified the relationships I was researching. The Foucauldian notion of a 'mosaic of power' also took on a vivid personal meaning for me.*

A final observation: I did not set out to evaluate whether the 'empowerment' dimension of the research had taken place. I might develop a better sense of that over time. But I did have insights in, for example, a discussion with Robert that took place at the end of the stage 5 interview. I went back to the initial reason he had given for taking part in the research. He had said that he wanted to become more confident in groupwork. I asked whether this had happened.

*Like I said, we sit and talk you know. It has an impact like I said, I used to differ with seemingly the group members but as time goes on I learnt to accept their views. Either*

*of us has to compromise so if say three do agree and I'm the only one who is opposing I have to compromise my ideas and we get going...and more importantly realising that we differ ideologically. Like sometimes one expect people to think like you do...like I never had compromise in my vocabulary. Then dealing with people, if you want to progress, one has to compromise. So that's one thing I acquired from this.. from this research....*

He talked about individuals in both his ELLIO3S class and our research group whom he had come to know better.

*Even at UCT like in the first semester I didn't like the tutorials and you were divided into groups and I hardly said something.*

He continues later:

*But now I think IT views are important. People need to know how I feel. So I can't just sit back and say no I'll let them talk. And it's good. I got involved. Even the course ...it's interesting. You discover other parts that you were not aware of. Like Tollefson we can interpret in different ways. It was something new which is good.*

This is not easy to interpret. He is talking about the curriculum in ELL1O3S as well as the research process, and the relationship between the two. He is also possibly saying what he thought I wanted to hear. But I do not think so. He did seem to come away with something. So had I, which I shall return to in my conclusion.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### DISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF TEXT IN CONTEXT

This chapter begins with an incident in the ELL103S classroom. Students were analysing the 'apprentice' and 'expert' texts from the second lesson (Appendix A). I joined a group discussing the extract from Raymond Williams's book "Culture." After studying Williams' style, a student remarked, "To write like this you have to live in the suburbs." He had observed (and pre-judged) that text and context are closely intertwined.

But just how tight is the fit between text and context? Does the one determine the other? As a mediator of academic writing to students from diverse social positions, questions such as these are important. The concept I use to explore this relationship between text (what is said or written) and context (the environment in which language emerges) is discourse.

In much second language acquisition theory, the term has the bland meaning of "a unit or piece of connected speech or writing that is longer than a conventional sentence" as in this definition from McCarthy (1992:316). Most often however, the term is associated with an *approach* to language, rather than an actual unit of language.

In linguistics, the search for a systematic study of language has tended to take two different directions. One emphasises language as a system, focussing on its abstract rule-bound features, the other, on language in use. Proponents of the former approach have tended to focus on language as an idealized system, studied as a system of signs (Saussure) or based on the sentence (Chomsky). The latter position with its emphasis on context and use is often associated with Hymes. The debates about competence vs performance, and langue vs parole reflect these two approaches, and are in essence about where best to locate the study of language - in the abstract system or its use.

The dilemma for linguists is that by moving too far from linguistic structure, one begins to move uncomfortably far from a clear study of language itself, and into other disciplines, such as psychology, anthropology, or literary theory is necessary, I think, to understand the relationship between text and context more fully.

1. Both Giddens (1987) and Riley (1985) give interesting accounts of these different orientations in linguistics. Giddens does so for its relevance to social theory and the problem of agency, while Riley investigates the relevance of this split for the relationship between discourse and learning.

I shall refer to approaches which focus on the abstract formal system of language, which can be studied in isolation from its context, as *structural*. Approaches which stress *communicative intent*, on the other hand, engage with the importance of language, linked to action, in particular contexts. This is the realm of discourse. It is an approach to the study of language which emphasises its role in the exchange of meaning in real life contexts. Riley (1985), Graddol et al (1987), and Cook (1989), for instance, define discourse in this way.

Within the broad grouping of theorists who stress the relationship between text and context there are different interpretations. One of the areas of disagreement is between those who use the term sociolinguistically (such as Hymes 1971, and Brown and Yule 1983), and others such as Kress (1989) and Fairclough (1992a and b) who work in a political discourse framework. Their criticism of the sociolinguists is that they regard differences between varieties as natural and thus downplay the ways in which language comes to reflect and sustain values and power relations in a culture, a perspective which must not be lost in theorising why access to discourse (exchanges of meaning in particular contexts) is harder for some than for others.

From social theory, with its focus on the individual within social institutions, another dimension has been added, which has influenced the political discourse theorists such as Fairclough. This is the concept of discourses, in the plural. I quote from Lee, who argues for an approach to language that stresses its heterogeneity, rather than its structuring qualities:

Following current practices, we will apply the term 'discourses' (a term derived from Foucault) to the many ways of speaking that are associated with different social contexts, and different speaking positions (1992:51).

Some writers who draw on social theory seem to opt for a rather more structural, tightly patterned interpretation of these multiple discourses. An example is Gee (1990). This is evident in the way he goes so far as to change the orthography of the word to give the concept extra authority by adding a capital D--'Discourse'.

Clearly, 'discourse' is a contested term, on the verge of wearing itself out beyond its use. My own interpretation is as follows: *discourse is a process of meaning exchange, via language, in a given context. Individuals have differing access to these patterns of exchange in different social contexts.* This is an attempt to bring together the view of discourse as negotiated meaning, with the fundamental recognition that individuals do not have equal access to this process of negotiation.

An investigation into discourse seems to hinge on where we think meaning is to be found. Is it in the text, or in the process of human interaction? Structural interpretations tend to fix meaning; by studying the word/sentence, one can predict context and meaning. A discourse approach on the other hand will be concerned with interactions between people and will thus make it possible to locate meaning in the user (the individual) rather than the system.

I would like to focus on two theorists who have had a strong influence on language thinking in my field of work recently. Both have influenced me to think about language far more contextually. But I argue that both are problematic for developing an understanding of text, context and social change.

The first is Halliday. His ideas are most clearly put forward in Halliday and Hasan (1985). He writes that learning is above all a social process in which language plays a major role. His view of language from a social semiotic perspective is expressed as follows:

Knowledge is transmitted in social contexts through relationships...And the words that are exchanged in these contexts get their meaning from activities in which they are embedded, which again are social activities with social agencies and goals (1985:5).

While this is a view of the relationship between language and learning which I find most persuasive, his argument creates an impression of a closed circle of meaning, allowing little alteration or play.

This impression is reinforced by the currency that has been given to the concept of register which is closely associated with Halliday. This concept provides a way of systematically analysing the relationship between text and context. How is it that we can immediately identify the context of strings of language such as "Right, who knows the answer?" as discourse of classrooms, or "Three hearts and a spade" as belonging to a card game rather than a gardening manual or a love story? For Halliday the idea of register helps to explain this human capacity for interpreting context from text and vice versa. It is a semantic concept, a configuration of meanings associated with a context of situation. This includes the linguistic features (words, sentence structure etc) which typically "realise those meanings" (1985:39). The concept of register enables us to predict context from text. They help create each other.

But the register would only be recognisable if we were familiar with the culture that supported a particular kind of language. Faced with something like "The time is now, Sekunjalo!" people unfamiliar with South Africa would be hardput to make much sense of it at all. Conversely, it helps explain why students who are unfamiliar with the necessary background knowledge and conventions might find certain texts hard to penetrate. I think that Halliday is useful for certain

descriptive purposes, but the concept is less useful for explaining how changes in discourses come about. By stressing a fixed, deterministic view of how registers uphold context, we are limited in our understandings and tolerance for alterations in meaning.

The concept of register is of limited use in the academic context where the register is relatively open, as opposed to closed registers, where there is no scope for individuality or creativity. For me, this tolerance is shown in this example. Ten years ago, few teachers in an English department would have identified this stretch of language as a sample from a first year English course: *"Now I can understand or hear a fast talking person. And this will mean my future's roots lay cluster in English."* This quote comes from an essay in the ELL103S course. Although the writing is metaphorically interesting, the discourse and general language control are fragile and inappropriate to the task. So he obtained a poor mark. This illustrates both the open and closed qualities of the 'register'.

A more satisfying account of the dynamics of language and culture comes from literacy theorists such as Heath (1983), Gee (1990), and Street and Street (1991). They have argued for the profound links between literacy and social processes. All three stress the interrelationship between language, learning and identity development.

Gee makes the distinction between discourse with a small 'd', which is a string of connected language that expresses context, and Discourse with a capital D. The latter is a kind of "'identity-kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions" (1990:142). It is a total package which has its own way of thinking-talking-feeling-believing that indicates group identity.

He also stresses that human beings typically belong to more than one of these Discourses. For all of us, there is a 'primary Discourse, the one that comes automatically ("free"), with enculturation; it is acquired as part of our birthright. These 'family' Discourses serve as a framework for the addition of other Discourses in later life.

Beyond the family, we meet 'secondary Discourses' which are associated with institutions such as schools, church, and the workplace. Some primary Discourses are more consonant with important status-carrying secondary Discourses than others. For example, transitions from the primary Discourse for a middle class English speaking child in South Africa to a secondary Discourse of schooling, would be much smoother and involve less dissonance than for a Xhosa speaking child from a rural area arriving at UCT. The cultural capital with which students arrive at UCT will be very different, and will put students in unequal positions.

I find his analysis of primary and secondary Discourses relevant for helping to understand the difficulties in transition to university that many students face. This notion of discourse dissonance introduces a critical dimension to his theory. If discourses are in competition, they will not be equal. Some will be "dominant", others "dominated".

From this distinction between primary and secondary Discourses, Gee develops this definition of literacy as:

Mastery of, or fluent control over, a secondary Discourse (1990:153).

There are two important implications to this definition. One, (a perspective shared by Street and Street) is that there are always multiple literacies, because there are many secondary Discourses, which we might or might not 'have'. Gee gives examples as diverse as being a man or woman, or belonging to a sewing circle.

The other is that becoming literate (fluent) in a Discourse is not easy, particularly if it is distant from your primary Discourse. He draws an analogy between second language learning and Discourse learning. By stressing the importance of acquisition (subconscious enculturation) over learning (conscious building of knowledge) he challenges teachers of academic literacy to think again about fundamental assumptions in their curricula.

While there are useful insights into acquisition of culture, and an acknowledgement that there are literacies rather than a literacy (ie schoolbased) and that individuals live with multiple literacies, he still seems to locate meaning within social structure, or the Discourse. He goes so far as to say:

There is no workable 'affirmative action' for Discourses...you are an *insider, colonised* or an *outsider* (1990:155).

In summary, Gee and Halliday both seem to locate meaning in the centre of discourses, so that they are conceived of as tight, binding entities.

I return to my definition of discourse as meaning exchange in context, to which individuals have variable access. It has some similarities with the 'Discourse' and 'register' concepts. But my emphasis is on *exchange and variable access for individuals*. With this perspective, it is possible to assign a stronger role to the individual as agent, acting sometimes from the centre, and at other times from the margins, border crossing, and making decisions.

From a general discussion of discourse, I move on to an exploration in a specific context.



### Discourse and text in universities

There is a growing literature which emphasises the culturally specific 'ways of knowing' that accompany entry into universities. Taylor et al state firmly in the introduction to their collection of essays on academic literacy that:

There can be no meaning to the term academic literacy outside the quite particular culture and cultures of the university (1988:5).

In the same collection, Ballard and Clanchy interpret the view that literacy standards are falling at universities (precipitated by increasing numbers of non-traditional students) as a failure on the part of academics steeped in a culture which they have not been able to relativise, to recognise the "unsteady transition between cultures" (1988:13) that students whose primary discourses are remote from university discourse have to make. These transitions act as barriers to access. They go on to argue that the way ahead is to make the relationships between literacy and culture explicit to students. Murray (1993) picks these concerns up in the South African context, and highlights the importance of feedback on writing as an important but generally undervalued aspect of developing academic literacy and increasing "epistemological access" for traditionally excluded students.

This raises the crucial role of writing in becoming literate in the Arts and Social Sciences. The essay is the primary mode for developing and upholding meaning in universities. I draw on Brown and Yule's expression of the relationship between text and discourse to make this relationship clearer:

...the record (text) of a dynamic process in which language was used as an instrument of communication in a context by a speaker/writer to express meanings and achieve intentions (discourse) (1983,26).

Thus text is an instance of discourse. Holec gives a clear illustration of this: a No Smoking" notice on a theatre wall is an example of discourse, but if it is stuck away in a drawer, it becomes "merely a text" (1985:22). The same can be said of an essay. One can study its formal qualities in isolation, or see it as part of discourse, where it becomes part of a process of negotiation of meaning between writer and marker, and at the same time, establishing identity as a student.

If text is part of discourse, the second part of my definition of discourse also applies to text. Individuals have variable access to its conventions, depending on their other experiences of practices with print. So Brown and Yule's definition above needs to be extended to encompass the way in which texts and discourses are value laden, some more powerfully than others. As a result, students have differing access to the essay. But access to what, exactly? Is there a typical essay text form? The answer seems to be both yes and no.

I probed this question of whether there is a general, recognisable form that can be described as 'academic' with my group of research students early on in the research process. We looked at an extract from a common first year text (see Appendix B) and I asked students how they would recognise this as 'academic.'

This is a summary of their responses: a) the paragraph structure is typical in that the first sentence sets the

topic, while the rest of the paragraph develops the idea chronologically (since it takes a historical approach);

b) that the writer has put the term 'community' in inverted commas, which is typical of academic writing, where writers often distance themselves and make sure of their definitions, and c), that instead of personal pronouns like 'I' and 'she', there are references. One student said "You are always coming across other people's ideas" rather than being able to flow with your own.

The discussion moved on and students focussed on how some disciplines give you more freedom than others. "You're following laws that Psychology has introduced you to, but in History there's no law. Only you have to do footnoting and a bibliography", and "Your discipline itself is bounding you." There were very different experiences of 'ways of knowing' in different disciplines.

Two general points emerged from this discussion. First, that any discussion of what academic writing is all about quickly ended up with 'It depends on the subject.' Second, that the one characteristic that came up consistently was *referencing*. I was interested to note that Clark, a committed CLA practitioner, has a list of conventions that she tells students "*not* to flout"; two of these involve referencing: "You must not plagiarise" and You should follow a recognised referencing convention and be consistent" (1992:136).

The convention of referencing is what characterises the academic essay more than any other feature. While it seems so simple to teach referencing techniques (just slot in the author's name and the date) in my experience of teaching academic literacy curricula, it has been very difficult to teach effectively. I would argue that this is precisely because it is a technique with a

deceptively simple linguistic form, which is deeply linked to the most fundamental aspect of academic literacy, that is, the construction of ideas on other texts, signalled through the naming of the author. This assumes an understanding of how authorship works in the academic conversation, where one is borrowing other people's words, and presumably starting from a position of having something to say.

I have found historical analyses of the function of the essay useful for describing and accounting for some of the difficulties with its form. Williams reminds us that the majority of people are only relatively recently beginning to gain access to the technique of writing, which has shaped culture from a distance over thousands of years. He points to the "confusion of developments" (in Gardener 1991:191) associated with this cultural change.

Foucault's "What is an Author?" also provides some insights into authorship in academic writing. He traces how the convention of naming the author in fiction is a relatively recent invention, a product of an industrial society characterised by individualism, from the end of the 18th century. He writes that the author's name performs a role, classifying and "marking off the edges of the text", showing "that this discourse is not everyday speech that merely comes and goes, not something that is immediately consumable. On the contrary, it is a speech that must be received in a certain mode, and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status" (in Lodge 1988:201). He argues that discourses characterised by the author-function enjoy a certain status. The role of the author, ironically, becomes that of one who "limits and excludes", rather than creates.

Academic text seems to qualify as one of these author-function discourses, with an ambivalent creator-excluder message at its core.

A perceptive article by Womack (1993) traces a similar ambivalence. He describes the historical process through which the essay has become the 'default genre' for student writing. The essay form itself comes to seem natural, as if intellectual activity will flow from it organically. Instead, it is a culturally specific form of communication which has not always existed. And since it has become linked to the exam system, it has developed a deeply contradictory form. On the one hand, students are required to be independent, critical, fresh and innovative; on the other they have to conform to the rules of appropriacy and balance. So independence and conformity have to be held in tension. This contradiction involves referencing in this way:

The inevitable stress signal of this tension is plagiarism. Bewildered or exhausted by the requirement that she should be herself and simultaneously approximate to a model outside herself, the candidate produces the contradiction in the form of deception - she *literally* adopts the voice of another as her own. The difference between this prohibited

form of pretence and the pretence which is essential to the genre is tiny; the boundary between them is policed with predictable anxiety (1993:46-7).

All genres carry constraints, but the academic essay seems to be more contradictory than most, both generous and open, yet acting as gatekeeper for an elite academic club.

From this historical exploration of ambivalence in the essay text, I move to examine writing in the Introduction to English course.

#### Student writing in ELL103S.

The writing task in ELL103S was complex (see page 6). Students were required to write in two different registers in parts (a) and (b), and then to stand back and analyse the linguistic changes in them, in (c). At the time of designing the task, I was drawn to the concept of register. There was a linguistic neatness to it comprehensive, systematic, predictable. The other teachers and I felt that the exercise would engage students in using their resources to explore language variety in different contexts, and that this would help to break down some of their alienation from academic writing, through an analysis of the nature of authorship and how it is expressed in academic writing.

It was an assignment that demanded acute self-consciousness: what to include in the personal section, (a), knowing that it was 'for marks'; (b) a summary of a complex argument, and (c) an analysis of the differences between the two. So the two texts, (a) and (b), had to generate enough material to enable students to do (c) properly.

Perhaps the greatest potential that the assignment has, is that it encourages students to 'try on' different ways of writing. Two things remain constant: the author him/herself, and the university context. Although the task requires students to write in different registers, the real context---a course assignment, for marks, to be read by a lecturer--remains the same.

As I have stressed before, the purpose of this research was not to evaluate a teaching approach through an assessment of students' writing. At this stage, I am not interested in the writing as product, as it might have been assessed in the course; instead, I take a different angle on the text, as a component of identity. The topic lent itself to this kind of analysis. I am 'subjecting' the texts to a discourse analysis, to see how much the language surface will reflect the context. I draw on my own knowledge of context to provide meaning. (In Chapter Five I analyse students' work differently, attempting a shared analysis of voices in their texts.)

My assumption was that students would find academic writing difficult to appropriate because it seems to silence, not to invite, participation. By setting an assignment that required personal and impersonal writing, I thought that the personal section (a), which provides an opportunity to write autobiographically, might generate a different kind of writing. I speculated that this might be more carefully constructed because of the new importance attached to being understood, and that as a consequence, the writing might have fewer interlanguage 'errors' characteristic of students with English as an additional language (EAL). In addition, I assumed that the familiarity of the subject would also affect language. If there are no content barriers, students will not stumble with linguistic expression.

An exploration of this question follows:

- do students write differently in the personal mode?

### Analysis of marks

Our mark scheme did not include allocating separate marks for each section, though we agreed to weight section (c) as most important since it involved the kind of textual analysis used in the English department.

There were three assignments in the language section of the course. The first assignment had been similar in structure (manipulating registers, but no directly personal writing). The second one was done under time pressure as a class exercise and resulted in erratic patterns (for instance, Peter was given marks of 63, 45 and 67 for consecutive essays). With one exception (Tumelo) all marks showed a general upward trend.

Using marks as my starting point, I looked for patterns between marks and the extent to which students had written personally. Carol, the student with the highest marks and a pattern as follows, 42, 74, 72, had written strongly personally. The other student with a mark in the 70s, Robert, (63, 60, 70) had written formulaically. So had Tsidi, whose marks showed the most consistent improvement. Tumelo registered a constant 57 for all assignments.

Patterns are almost impossible to make sense of without adopting a wider frame of reference, which interprets meaning as beyond the text. For instance, I think that the 'weaker' student, Tumelo, achieved a low mark in part because the critique of the course which he included in his assignment irritated his tutor, who admitted as much.

### A brief textual analysis

The complexities of the writing task only became apparent to us in the marking process. The topic for a) - your personal experience of the English language at UCT" - immediately raises problems of choice for the writer. Most writers expressed deep ambivalence about the place of English, acknowledging its convenience for communication, but also the losses and creation of inequalities that go with it. Within this highly political topic, they had to adopt a point of view, a way of dealing with the ambivalence, while at the same time expressing themselves through the medium itself, in a context in which they were being evaluated. What Halliday and Hasan (1985) call the context of situation' and the wider 'context of culture' is complex and highly charged. This is reflected in the text.

I identify two discourse analysis categories for understanding student language for this task. Firstly, an examination of 'thematisation'. As Brown and Yule write, "What the speaker or writer puts first will influence the interpretation of everything that follows" (1983:133). For example, the heading or first sentence used by the writer will influence the interpretation of the text. Gee (1990) suggests a more relevant and contextual way of thinking about theme through the analytical tool which he calls 'thematic organisation'. He sees this as a means of trying to understand the way writers attempt to resolve binary tensions in most texts. In this case the tension is between negative feelings about the English language and rational evidence that it is 'a good thing'. This opposition seems to be reflected at all levels in the discourse organisation.

The second feature I touch on is the use of personal pronouns to create cohesion (the way the text hangs together) in the text. In these texts, pronouns play a major part in establishing connectivity.

I have chosen the scripts of two students, Tsidi and Andile, for a brief analysis (see Appendix C). They represent extremes. Tsidi's text was one of the least personal, much of it written in the typical 'social language' of universities. Andile's was one of the more individually expressive, resulting in a marked difference between sections a) and b). (Happily, this upset my gender-biased expectations.)

Starting with *thematisation*, Tsidi begins "English is used as a medium of instruction in UCT." She goes on to mention the need for a common language for successful communication, stating her own finding that that this arrangement is more convenient." The way the theme is established is a statement of fact, unemotional and practical. Her position within this situation is uncontroversial. In contrast, Andile begins "My personal account of my experience of English language at UCT is that experience which the most African students have experience." He is

building solidarity with other students who are of the same educational background and thus experience the same gap that he does. Throughout his text there is an overt contrast between his experience and that of white students.

Tsidi creates a different contrast in the second paragraph. It is between herself and those who have studied at 'disadvantaged' Department of Education and Training (DET) schools. Without saying so directly, she implies that she is not from a DET school. "I personally never had great difficulties in coping..." is wedged between two sentences where the sentence sequencing creates the impression that she attended a "multiracial" rather than a school for 'disadvantaged' students. In fact, I knew from the interview with Tsidi that she had gone to a DET school in Mabopane outside Pretoria. Perhaps she felt that this way of positioning herself would influence the marker.

I think that her conclusion gives her ambivalence away. In paragraph three she writes "I therefore conclude by saying that people tend to forget their native languages due to the pressures they get here. " I would have expected the final sentence ("It is necessary to have a uniform language...") to follow "I therefore conclude..." Her conclusion is couched in academic language: the lexis is formal eg "due to", "tend to forget" and "whereby". The final sentence is in the passive mood, emphasising the impersonality of the official position and her distancing from it as a problem.

Andile, on the other hand, expresses the ambivalence in a very different way. His lexis is more about feelings ("bring comfort", "feel at home") and has the mark of a personal position arrived at after a great deal of thought. The conclusion is strengthened by the route by which he got there, with a persuasive blend of personal and political reflection. This is particularly strong in paragraph four:

*Sometimes this power is demonstrated on conversations where they begin to speak for me by saying what I am struggling to say. That on its own make one feel less intellectual sometimes.*

The achievement of *cohesion* through each writer's use of personal pronouns seems to relate to the overall thematisation. Both use pronouns to set up an "I-them" situation. For instance in the section quoted from Andile above: "they speak for me....make one feel less intellectual". The change to the pronoun "one" creates both distance and solidarity with a group of people who might be experiencing the same thing. He uses "my", "me" and "I" frequently (his first word is "My"). Tsidi, on the other hand, uses far fewer personal pronouns. She often uses "I" linked to verbs such as "discovered", "found" and "realised", which creates the impression of a rather

distanced, researching sort of persona. She says "I personally" in paragraph three to emphasise her distance from "they" (DET students.)

Taking a step back from these two students, to the group of essays as a whole (I marked at least 50 scripts), what struck me most clearly about this task was that the students were forced by the context to foreground their disadvantage. The construction of disadvantage begins before arrival at UCT, but this task made it necessary for students to establish their underpreparedness very clearly. Many began with sentences such as "Having English as my second language at UCT does not make me feel comfortable...", "Since I am from a DET school, things were not easy...", and "I have never thought that constant use of another language can deter mine. I am saying so because of using English language at UCT." This must have an effect on how students see themselves and their intellectual abilities.

I shall attempt to answer my original question, do students write differently in the personal mode? This brief analysis highlights the strong impression gained that students do not necessarily write 'better' when asked to write personally. At the level of grammar, there seemed to be no relationship between writing personally and writing more carefully. Apart from typical EAL errors such as articles, prepositions, and uninflected verb endings, students seemed to struggle more with the personal writing. At times, meaning 'broke down' which it seldom did in the summary, which I would presume to be more cognitively demanding.

Some reasons for this could be as follows: firstly, the political choices about how to position yourself, what to conceal or reveal, are complex, particularly if English is not your first language, and your previous experience labels you as disadvantaged. Does one reveal these differences, and possibly draw the sympathy and interest of the marker, or conceal this different experience? This analysis of the reveal/conceal issue might well be my construct rather than anything students are consciously making decisions about. I had an opportunity to ask students about this in a later stage of the research (see Chapter Five) .

This leads to the second point: writing personally is complicated by the assessment context. There should be opportunity to write personally and in an exploratory way without concern for marks.

Third, by the end of their first year these students had acquired and/or learnt a strong sense of the genre of the academic essay. They would be aware of the formal patterns that shape a text in a particular context. In the Arts and Social Sciences, the dominant genre would be what Hyland (1992) calls 'the argumentative essay'. The discourse features such as paragraph structure and cohesion markers are becoming familiar. However, there is no genre for personal writing. As a result there is no supportive frame that will carry decisions about structure and the cultural



conventions for this new kind of task. This is probably made worse by the fact that many students will not have written in the personal unmasking sort of mode in any language, particularly not in English. Their main experience of writing will have been at school, with all the expectations that accompany this kind of writing, which is often narrative in structure.

Having just made the point that there is no genre for personal writing, I think there is clear evidence of students having thought and talked about these issues, though they might not have had practice in writing in varieties of language other than formal-academic. Most students seemed to have thought through their ambivalence about the English language and come to terms with it, as in these comments:

*The wide use of the English language at UCT has helped me to improve my writing and communication skills, despite the fact that I sometimes feel alienated and uncomfortable when I am using it.*

*My experience of English language differs as time progresses.*

*English caused me a lot of heartache and anger, but ultimately it is for the best.*

Another useful way of looking at Tsidi's writing in particular is exemplified in Winburg's interesting analysis of the different 'discursive formations' (a term borrowed from Foucault) evident in students' entrance tests to UCT's English department. It is informative in the analysis of writing such as Tebogo's. She compares first language and EAL students' different use of discourse patterns and relates these to test results. She concludes that, if tests are to avoid upholding patterns of privileging, "there is a need for discourse communities to analyse what Said has called 'the rules behind the rules' (1993:290). This is easier said than done, a point I return to in the conclusion.

Tsidi's essay is interesting in terms of the different 'languages' (or 'discursive formations') that seem to be uncomfortably next to one another in this section of her writing. While she seems to have fewer typical EAL errors than Andile, there is a confusion of discourse formations evident in her writing. For example, academic patterns of language such as "In addition to this" are alongside much more experiential phrases such as "...I realised that around campus people feel..." or "you end up speaking English" is followed by "I therefore conclude..." These struggles in the discourse seem to me to reflect the deeper ambivalence, and possibly even contribute to the ruptures in coherence. This task, in this context, did not assist her to write "better".

My interpretations of what students are writing, particularly my analysis of the tension that pervades their texts, is tentative and needs to be probed more, which could be done by the writer, the original marker or myself. But these analyses would always be partial and incomplete. To understand Tsidi's or Andile's language better, we would try to see how they use language in other contexts. This is a particular moment, in which they have consciously or unconsciously adjusted their discourse structure to signal their identity. They might do so very differently in another context.

I return to the question I asked at the beginning of this chapter: how important is the relationship between text and context? I believe that this analysis shows that they are deeply linked, but in a way that is not easy to describe in any snugly fitting analysis, or from one angle or discipline. The nature of the task (a type which is becoming increasingly popular in universities) forced me to confront the diverse, hybrid, nature of language, rather than its neatly definable qualities.

As university teachers, our professional focus is on one particular context, the university, and its discourse patterns. We start to think of 'learning' in terms of what we do, which is to teach the same concerns year in and year out, while our students simply pass through. University is a short period in their intellectual lives. The analysis of more personal student writing, in which they had the opportunity to write autobiographically, gave some insights. To get a fuller sense of the individual moving through the discourse field, with a history and a future, I move on to the concept of voice and analyse the biographical interviews conducted with students.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MANY VOICES

The previous chapter was concerned with student writing as discourse, as a conversation within the bounds of the context that supports it. Discourse is about dialogue, where rules underlie the way in which individuals speak or are heard. In this chapter, the focus changes to a more linear, individual mode of analysis. It is individuals who uphold, perpetuate and stretch discourses, and who give them life through their choices and actions. The concept I use for highlighting the individual is voice.

Because it is essentially individual and often emotive, it is much more unsettling and is not easily brought to order. Jean Rudduck expresses this well:

Voices remind us of the individuality that lies beneath the surface of institutional structures whose routine nature pushes us to work for 'sameness' rather than to respond to difference (1993:8).

This understanding of voice has been important for me as a researcher. Our course, Introduction to English, is theoretically located in a critical language paradigm, which works from the premise that students are oppressed by language in particular ways. Combined with the student composition of the course (all students are speakers of English as a second language and almost all are black, while all three teachers are white and female) one can end up with a deterministic, diversity-obscuring set of ideas behind the curriculum. This point is strongly developed in Ellsworth's provocative article, which asks what diversity is silenced in the name of 'liberatory' pedagogy? (1989) At the same time, she makes it clear that she, as a white, female, middle class academic, cannot unproblematically 'help' a 'student of colour' to find his or her voice.

I identify strongly with her concerns, while at the same time wanting to do more than deconstruct, to look again and from there to find ways of reconstruction, "to try to find a commonality in the experience of difference without compromising its distinctive realities and effects" (1989:324).

1. An example of teachers' assumptions about language and oppression occurred in the ELL103S course. At the beginning of my unit of materials, students were asked to collect examples of university discourse that we would analyse in class. Most were bland notices or posters from noticeboards. It was the teachers who added the more political contributions, such as the pamphlet on the education crisis, or the vice chancellor's letter on the 'peace campaign'. Students did not choose the samples we thought they would.

If we are to see other experience--different literacies or discourse contexts which have been meaningful to students-- and to give these value, we have to ask individuals to describe where they have been. We have to lift the curtain and see what is obscured by the autonomous view of literacy.

This is where my attempt at a more ethnographic analysis of students' experience, preceding and during their time at university, is relevant. I assumed that the interviews would bring to light other influences and experiences that have a bearing on the way students see themselves as writers of academic discourse. So in research terms, voice here has the sense of giving weight to individuals and areas of their experience traditionally overlooked. It also raises questions about how much the university's ways of organising difference (usually seen as educational 'underpreparedness') allow for important and possibly overlooked alternative perspectives and experiences. I wanted to attempt what Ndebele calls "a more extensive approach to social understanding" (1990:22).

The question informing this chapter is:

What can we learn about writing from biographical interviews with students?

### The biographical interviews

What follows is an analysis of students' experiences made visible through the semi-structured interviews I conducted with them. The interviews took a broadly biographical form, with me asking students to begin with personal details, such as birthplace, family, and anything that seemed important to know. I told students that I would follow the same broad path for everyone, starting with biographical details and moving on to schooling, transition to university and a closer look at each person's experience of writing essays.

At some point in the interview I asked each person the same question. I sketched a river-like image and asked students to locate themselves in relation to this 'stream', representing academic writing, which we had previously discussed. I was influenced by Gee's (1990) thesis that students were either in, out or colonised by a literacy practice, and wanted to explore the extent to which students identified with academic writing.

The biographical structure of the interviews suggested an analysis that focussed on transitions. I was also influenced by Ballard and Clanchy's observation about "unsteady transitions between

cultures" (1988) and wanted to open this up for investigation to see what these 'cultures' might be, and more importantly, how students themselves described them.

The importance of literacy and transitions is emphasised by Barton (1991) who proposes a framework for describing everyday literacy practices, which in addition to describing roles, networks of support, and the values that literacy holds for individuals, includes the theme of *literacy and change* when discussing writing. As he points out, people generally read and write in order to achieve other ends. This is a perspective that we tend to forget in our strong association of the autonomous view of literacy with formal education.

The tone of the interviews varied markedly among interviewees: some students needed little prompting, foregrounding very personal observations from the beginning. They seemed to enjoy talking about themselves, often asking me questions and seeming to be very comfortable with the process. Others were far more guarded. The initial impressions I had formed after our group meetings were often not confirmed: students who seemed very confident were fairly reserved in the interviews, while several who seemed withdrawn and shy, were remarkably open. Brief profiles of the 13 students interviewed can be found in Appendix D. A full transcript of the entire interview with Robert appears in Appendix E. I regard this as one of the more open and successful interviews.

I have had to make a choice between retaining the biographical nature of the interviews so that the reader has a sense of the individual speaking, or giving precedence to the themes that emerged. I have chosen the latter approach, which means that the individuals recede and the issues are foregrounded. There are gains and losses in this choice.

In transcribing these interviews, I have retained the grammar of the originals, but have at times shortened and selected from the interviews for the following reasons. First, for this stage of the research, I was more interested in what students say than in how they say it. Thus I was not analysing the interviews as discourse, but as narratives. Second, full accounts, with all their hesitance, would take more space than is available to me in this dissertation. As I have already mentioned, it might have been better to have interviewed fewer students.

### Transitions

Much of the substance of the interviews, being semi-structured and biographical, touched on many other aspects of students' lives, so that I have been left with a series of profiles of individual effort, influences, emotions, disappointments, reflections, which have left a deep

impression. Inevitably there is a great range of experience. In this section, I highlight some of the categories that were mentioned most often.

Some kind of paradise“.

Several students described painfully disjointed schooling years, characterised by moving between parental figures, languages, schools and urban-rural settings. For example, Mpho described a period of his life in this way:

*So from my Sub A to Std Three, I didn't see what was actually going on. Really I didn't. Because I was living with my grandmother in Sekukhuneland, somewhere in the Northern Transvaal. She didn't receive any form of education and the people we were living with around...in the village...they didn't get any education. So now we were not having people to encourage us to study...People were just stereotyped. The kind of work that people was embarking on was fieldwork and circumcision--that's the only things that people liked, and even religion, not so many people even liked religion...So now from Std Three to Four I was in Bophutatswana where I was living with my father only and mind you he wasn't working right then so now I had to go through all those difficult years, difficult years that I won't ever forget in my life...From Std Five I went to my uncle in Pietersburg and I couldn't cope with that kind of life I was living with my father only. There were so many problems.*

For others, the earlier transitions were relatively smooth. Faith, for instance, had been to a convent school in Soweto throughout her school years. Transitions were probably least sharp (geographically and linguistically, though not in class terms) for Carol, who still lives at home, and schooled in the bilingual English-Afrikaans context of a 'coloured' school in Cape Town. But there were nevertheless adjustments for her too.

*Well, to say frankly I didn't expect to come to UCT. For me and my family it was a great honour I'm the first one in my family...to actually go to university or to get tertiary education as it is, and I'm the youngest.*

Later in the interview she said:

*I was quite anxious about coming here, knowing this big institution, always seeing it from there on the Flats, and looking up and seeing [the statue of Cecil John] Rhodes.*

Mpho has a similar preconceived notion of UCT:

*The first thing I was having when I was accepted, I was having a certain picture of UCT (laughs)...some kind of paradise...ah...residence...there's a gateway, people.. just like Turjloop. I was having a certain picture of UCT. The most marvellous kind of university the world has ever had. But when I get in here, seeing Marquard and Tugwell and Baxter - phew, I wondered... But all in all I've realised with these big institutions...because I've been to Wits several times...I was having a wrong picture. But it was quite fantastic to be admitted here because it's really too far away from home...*

*LT: That suits you? <sup>2</sup>*

*Ja. I wanted to be far away from home so as not to be close to problems that can affect my work.*

Several students spoke about being far from families, some in terms of it being a relief so they could get on with their lives, while only Nathan seemed to experience this as a real problem. His mind was constantly on his home situation. Only four of the 13 students interviewed still had both parents living, and in one place.

A common factor for all students is that transitions were inevitably and predictably uneven as a result of the change to English as medium of instruction in education. But few students commented on this. More often they spoke of the different ways of the university curriculum.

### School to university

This is Mkhululi's response to a question on whether he had found the 'whiteness' of UCT a problem:

*Firstly I knew that UCT is white and I knew that it won't be easy. The major difference was the style of studying. Like I'm just under pressure, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. At school I used to be free. But UCT being white, it didn't really affect me. I knew. I think I was ready, ja, I was ready for it.*

Mpho had this to say about referencing:

*It's [referencing] disturbing because we're not used to this kind of thing. And when you think of this academic writing, it's a very less obvious thing that in our DET curriculum we are only provided with one textbook... the structure with which the textbook has been written...it's very easy for me to go through what's been written and it's very easy for me to swallow the whole textbook. And the teacher doesn't give you a chance to explore around or to play around with a specific concept. They don't want your own opinion. You have to give exactly what the textbook instructs.*

*LT: Does academic writing ask for your own opinion?*

*Ja. So I think academic writing it's quite good because you play around with concepts and it gives you room to think about a specific concept. You can even escape from the texts which you've been given.*

Or Carol, who talked about the difference between school and university to try and describe what academic writing involved:

*I think firstly good academic writing it's ability to express yourself clearly and to...and if I may say so it's quite different from primary school writing and in a sense secondary school writing. In tertiary education, firstly your words, your vocab expands. In primary school you can say 'She is a nice girl' and actually now you're finding better words for 'nice'. In a sense...what's the word... the information you get here, and the resources available to you, enables you to write...not highfaluted words, but actually, your ability to explain yourself and express is...I cannot put this in words...it enables you to think, you must think... at school you wrote everything that came into your mind, without considering why, and I think the main thing we're doing here is why--why am I saying what I'm saying and doing what I'm doing. You've got to work critically and analyse more.*

This comment is from Nathan, who had been out of school for a long time:

*I have to be self-reliant, self-responsible whatever, but at school I had to rely on a teacher, like a jug and a cup: the teacher was the jug and I was like a cup. They always have to pour over some of the information they have. Now I feel more free. I won't say it's total freedom. I'd say it's partial freedom. You still have to play according to the rules.*

These comments are fairly predictable, and are generally positive about the new freedoms that come with academic writing. I feel there is a formulaic dimension to these comments, as if the



interview situation and academic context determined the kind of statements that students would make. For example, the 'jug and cup' metaphor, or Mpho's comment about 'playing with concepts' are typical language from orientation or Academic Support programmes.

### Academic writing and identity

One of my main interests in this research was in the extent to which students identified with academic writing. I was interested in whether they 'recognised themselves', as Ndebele (1987,13) puts it. Gee (1990) states confidently that students who are marginal to a discourse can never fully belong, and that people are in one of three positions in terms of discourse membership: they are in, out or colonised.

I probed this sense of belonging by asking all students a common question about their position relative to a 'stream' representing academic writing.

These comments were typical: "I'm in it but going somewhere"; "I'm inside. I belong to this river but the current is fast"; "I'm half way in"; "It depends on the course. My effort isn't widely spread. I'll be inside during exams. I'm waiting, arming myself for what I call the major battle? and "I'm in the middle. Next year won't be hard like this."

On the face of it, Gee would seem to be right. It is a struggle, being constantly 'half in'. But how does one ascertain whether someone is 'colonised'? And who is to make that judgment? A closer look at the interviews with a selection of students reveals a more complex picture.

I begin with Mpho:

*LT: If you think of this thing we've been talking about, good academic writing, as a stream, where would you see yourself in relation to it?*

*I'm just about to be well acquainted enough, to equip myself for academic writing because the more I get comments on what you actually write...ja...the more I get comments on the type of writing I have to embark on, it's the more I'm getting experience and knowledge of what actually is to be done. So I think that I'm just about to make it.*

I see this comment of Mpho's as giving the expected response. He might be expressing a hope, or what he thinks I want to hear, rather than what he actually believes.

At the end of the interview, he said something which tells a markedly different story. I asked him whether he could express himself in academic writing.

*... more especially in Politics, you cannot just say everything you want. You must pretend as if you are non-partisan as if you don't belong to any party or liberation movement so I just try to be on the margin...and if you've got white tutors you don't want to write something that's gonna incite them...they do not want party slogans and the likes...the tutors are also emotional as well, they are human beings... if I write something that's inciting on paper it's possible that's gonna have a negative effect.. just because he or she happens to be Malan's granddaughter or son there are certain facts and he or she knows them but I cannot just put them because I do feel that they are extremely inciting... also making sure that I do not do things excessively. Pm just trying to balance things. I cannot hide almost everything*

Carol speaks of her entry into the academic stream in this determined, and very 'grown up' way:

*You have to adapt yourself. I mean you cannot forever stay on the outside. You have to get yourself in the flow of things.*

*LT: Has that been an easy thing for you to do, taking a step into the flow of things?*

*I think so. I remember on school, when we were given a task to do, most of the students didn't want to do it. They were plain lazy. Only a few like myself really did manage to get things done, and, I took a step in my secondary school years and when I came to UCT it was just a matter of getting into it. My initiative was there all along. I wanted to get into the flow of things as soon as possible. I told myself, you cannot sit back and say well, I did not get a well enough education. You must do something about it, and it's no use staying on the outside, like my friend at UWC. She say that she cannot get into the rhythm of university...they're used to spoonfeeding...But I told myself when I got the letter that I was accepted here: I made a resolution..Th going to do the best I can. I'm going to succeed and its no use staying on the outside bitterly, you must get in the flow.*

She spoke about her friends' attitudes to her since she had been at UCT. She said she thought she had become more mature, while they still 'laughed at cripple people'. She shows her intolerance of their hesitation. She said that this process had not started at UCT; she had always been a dreamer and a thinker, and had previously been called an 'ice-maiden'.

*They want to be happy-go-lucky all the time. They take no responsibility for their actions and I cannot do what they do. So it didn't start at UCT as such. It came a long way at UCT. It's like UCT is the nail.*

She is committed to getting 'in the flow' and seems to have built a strong moral position, with herself as an outsider from her peer group.

Andile is involved in a struggle to get somewhere which creates conflict about his identity. In the interview, this struggle was communicated with a sense of complexity and urgency which the bald print does not convey:

*At the moment maybe I'm struggling to get inside. I don't feel quite happy about where I am. I'm not very close. To get further in I should have to start thinking...the main problem is time management, like locating myself in a place where I cannot be disturbed, by any people like friends. In res there are lots of guys who are coming from the same school, lots of Xhosa-speaking people. It's that kind of environment. I want the kind of environment with people who don't know me exactly, who can just know me as a student from UCT, not as someone from the location, from Luhlaza High and Nyanga East, and be with those fellow students. When I'm finished I can be myself, Andile from Luhlaza, or whatever. But while I'm here there is a very short time. I have to make sure I don't fall back again.*

On the face of it, one could say that he is 'colonised' in his attempt to behave differently and distance himself from his peers, in order to create a new identity for himself.<sup>3</sup> yet whatever his efforts, according to Gee, these "colonised students control (and accept the values in) the Discourse just enough to keep signalling that others in the Discourse are their 'betters' and to become complicit with their own subordination" (1990:155). This impression is reinforced by another comment elsewhere in the interview:

*I love the university, the style. By coming here I'd be a UCT student, a product of UCT and I'd be proud.*

I shall return to Andile in the next section when I consider the effect of multiple identities on writing, to look at identity from another angle.

Tumelo also perceives that there is a shift that he has to make in his writing. He was born in Sharpeville, spoke warmly of memories of schooling there and said he was definitely going

3. It is interesting to compare Andile's comments here with his assignment in the course (analysed in Chapter Three). In the written text, he builds solidarity with other students in the same position.

back to the region, to Sebokeng where his family now lives. He mentioned a History 2 assignment he was about to write. "It deals with Sharpsville. I can still visualise the way it was narrated to me by my grandfather".

In response to the 'stream' question, he said:

*Like I just said, it's not easy for me. I'm still young. I'm at the mouth of the river. I'm still like a small river trying to get into the big river. I'm not yet ripe.. And I get bored when I write and rewrite...*

Later I returned to this comment of his:

*LT: To come back to something you said about not being ripe or ready...it's like you were saying you're there [indicating on the sketch of the river] rather than here. What do you mean by ripe? When will you be ripe?*

*I would be ripe when I can still adhere to academic discourse. Like you're telling me that I have to re-write my artefact so that it can have meaning to that person. I know that I still have difficulty of implementing it. So I have to get out of the me that's in me so that I can get into the university of academic discourse, to be free from the decision that I take as an individual, not as an academic.*

*LT: Do you see yourself and academic as different?*

*Ja, totally different. Because the way I view things I view them differently from what the book says and the law...*

*LT: So for you it's not so clear that you ought to be there rather than there?*

*Ja. Right now I know that I have to move from here to here. But for me it's not easy. Like I told you I have different ideas in my mind. So for me its like...that's you know full of wood that takes everything after the rain. So I'm like a river. I want to take everything, papers, twigs, inside. So when that river start to go down those twigs stand up. Some people would say that's residue that I've written. To me I saw it as an important thing to take.*

Tumelo is clearly ambivalent about the changes required of him to enter this river. He would have to leave important things behind, what 'some people' would call 'residue'. The History 2 essay he wrote was an attempt to enter the river. (I discuss this essay in Chapter Five). Both he

and Andile seem to be aware of gains and losses associated with moving from the tributary into the main river.

At 31, Nathan was the oldest student I interviewed. He had been working for years, most recently as a petrol attendant. He matriculated by studying through correspondence colleges. He was obviously burdened by responsibilities at home. His family seemed to rest on him. A second year student with whom I had had brief contact the previous year, his work had improved markedly in the course of his second academic year. Yet he never completed the ELL103S course as he had to return to Victoria West twice during the semester, to attend funerals of family members.

In response to the 'stream' question, he says:

*believe that I'm doing my best, trying to. As a student you just have to think sometimes and act academically...I enjoy it when we've got the freedom of trying to construct our own essay questions. Ill can put my own question I feel more confident in doing my essay. Sometimes it seems as if there's something you have to leave out. It's as if it's a trick...If you put the question yourself it's as if you know what you expect to give. It's that son of freedom that I preferred..) use the word playground, ne, maybe as an alternative to this term 'good academic writing'--not only writing but acting as well: you have to think academically, act academically, now there's a bit of freedom. Maybe that freedom happens... maybe, my intellectual self ..If you were outside you won't have to act that way. In other words you are still free within the academic context.*

*LT: Can you give me an example of what you mean by acting academically?*

*Ja. I'm just a loss of words. Can we come to that later? But I know what I mean by it.*

He introduced the metaphor of the playground to explain the nature of academic writing. This enabled him to understand the rules and the freedom involved.

Mkhululi seemed to have the same critical distance on academic writing. He was one of the few students to foreground his political involvement early on in the interview, and spoke about how his 'English improved because of politics'. I asked him in which course he 'thrived' most. He said Psychology: "I'm passing it very well. I like politics but not as a course, especially here".

He described how he had joined a black consciousness organisation in the late 1980's, against the general trend of politics in the region. He described how he has learnt English from intellectuals, who "used to speak English using bombastic words".

I asked whether he felt he could really express his political ideas in his Political Studies course.

*No, and anyway I don't feel that it is necessary, but I don't feel really free in expressing my views. I just don't. Sometimes you come up with a point and you're told that it's not academic or factual. And another point is that we just know those things and then we try to argue them and we don't argue them academically. Sometimes you come up with what you think is your personal feeling and then you're told that you're plagiarising some white guy who happened...to be fortunate to get information and to jot it down, not because you're stealing his ideas. At times you didn't even see the book, you are just analysing the situation, and then you put your facts and then you are told that, heh, this is not your point. You're plagiarising someone. And at times you don't feel free, you don't know who said it, and... it really limits, you know... it really limits us.*

*LT: Ja, and when you say 'we'...I'm just listening with a critical language ear..?*

*OK?*

*LT: You said we know these things, we don't feel free... meaning?*

*Right. The students who are said to be disadvantaged, like black, let me say black students. So we as black people, we sometimes feel we are limited to only do what the book says, that...*

*LT: So you play the game?*

*Exactly, because our passing [laughs] depends on it.*

When asked where he would see himself in the 'stream', he said that when he looked back over the year, he could see improvement. He felt he was in it , but that he did not do what he was supposed to do in writing.

*I think I can express my feelings or myself using this...this register. As I said, it's just that I'm not doing it, not because I think I can't express myself; I think I can change...I can shift, you know, from the way I am writing to what the university is expecting and still express myself*

4. In the ELL103S course, we had been analysing the way writers use personal pronouns, in this example, to build solidarity.

His attitude 'our passing depends on it seemed to have some of the same sense of strategic perspective and opportunity that Nathan had expressed in the use of the playground metaphor.

His comments on referencing and plagiarism were echoed in the words of the next student, Robert. A transcript of the full interview with Robert is in Appendix E. He is the only person who was not asked the 'stream' question. This is a measure of the extent to which I was absorbed in what he was saying. With hindsight, I felt that he had answered it anyway, with comments such as: "I even enjoy writing essays"; "I'm doing well--this shows I understand my job".

He was most informative about the transitions in his life, and about academic writing and identity. The transitions, like Mpho's, were profound: from rural farm school, to Pietersburg to UCT. He learnt how to make these transitions through becoming highly analytical. He sees that this is a mixed blessing, verging on 'self-abuse', making his social life more difficult.

Like Mkhululi, he found referencing material with which he was culturally very familiar difficult, "...all things that I know. If I say this it might appear as stealing".

*...you take a book in the library saying something about African healers. Basically they'll say things you know and if you say you know this, that is plagiarism because somebody has said that already... You know it's so devastating...like I know African religion is so closely related to culture itself I even think that religion is culture itself. Then some African writers, say all the things that I know, like they are Africans too, they have the very same experience as I do. So if I say this it might appear as if this people is stealing somebody's writing. Now you portray this as if it is your own thinking...then you don't have any facts. I mean how can you write an essay in which somebody said this and all your essay is quotations? We are re-writing what has already been written, and if you don't prove that you took this from a certain writer then that's plagiarism, but then like I said, I like analysing...) like thinking a lot about these things... the way you write about it and the way I write about it is different.*

*Like this other African writer for example, he used to say 'God', like we, we don't have 'God', we have 'Modimo', you know--superior being--so I chose not to mention 'God' in my essay.*

*LT: Did you use the word 'Modimo'?*

*Ja. I said 'Modimo' in direct commas you know. so that's Modimo. We don't know God. We know Modimo. But when I refer to someone, I write it straight, I say he said God'... but then I didn't say they used 'ancestors'. I said they used 'Badima' as a sort of a link between the living and Modimo. You see there's a difference there...*

*LT: It changed the meaning?*

*Ja.*

*LT:... Are you a religious person?*

*That's a very difficult question..... Do you mean I'm Christian?*

*LT: No. I mean it wider than that*

He informs me about the difference between 'Modimo' and 'Badima', God and the ancestors.

*So if I say I'm a Christian, then basically I turn my back against my culture now.. Like I said before, a child becomes what he learns. You know! used to pray according to the Christians. But now I have a problem. If I had to pray like that, I think I have to change it I have to change the meaning and the words that I choose to use. See like I can't say 'In the name of Jesus Christ' because I think Jesus was for some other people, not for Africans. I don't know. Maybe that's for politics...But if I have to be honest with you, this radical change in my life came here at UCT.*

He was one of two students (Bongani was the other) who seemed to have been politicised by the UCT curriculum. Robert seems to feel that writing has always come easily to him. He likes analysis, figuring out who is speaking, the complex conversation signalled by referencing. The process of writing seems to have raised questions about his own identity. Should he use the word 'God' or 'Modimo'? The word 'Modimo' appears like the tip of an iceberg in the essay he talks about, and represents a careful choice to insert something, a resistance to the dominant discourse, which would use the word 'God' to signify Modimo, which has a different meaning, as Robert himself points out.

Soon after this interview with Robert, I read Cazden (1992) which seemed to relate directly to what Robert was saying. His choice of 'Modimo' rather than 'God' is a highly conscious act of what Cazden calls "creative resistance, a transformational solution in which (one) does not have to compromise" (1992:2(4)). The word 'Modimo' has its own connotations which have grown around it from its immediate context of situation and culture.



If Robert had not mentioned this moment in his life when he had chosen to resist in this way, it would have gone unnoticed, or been seen as a misunderstanding on his part. It is not a context in which we would traditionally look for evidence of resistance and power relations. Gee's categories do not do justice to the processes at work in Robert's choice-making.

This interview with Robert made me think differently about voice, and to begin to see it as a linguistic concept. I started out with voice as a concept for the individual to be heard, in speech, and through that to understand the influences acting on the person. I became more aware of the influences in their speech, rather than simply mapping out terrains of influence that might be visible in writing.

At this point, I shall move to the next theme. Where the curriculum overlapped with an area of meaningful experience (religion) Robert clearly identified with what he was writing. The same was true of Tumelo, when his History task involved an analysis of an event in South African history which literally could not have been 'closer to home'.

#### Multiple discourses, or multiple voices?

In the interviews, some students spoke about other influences on them. As mentioned earlier, social literacy theory raises the importance of other 'cultures of literacy'. The importance of these is most clearly indicated in the interview with Mkhululi, who spoke disarmingly of the way religion and politics intersected in his life.

*When I was doing Std 6 at high school I wasn't that active. I was preoccupied by karate and church. I'm a Christian as such. [laughing]*

*LT: Interesting mixture...*

*So I was busy with my Christian life and karate, but I attended meetings. I was not serving in any structures...*

*LT: Was there conflict for you, or were you just too busy?*

*No, I was just too busy. But other people saw it as a contradiction, like being a Christian and being involved in politics, and not just in politics, but being a member of BC. But I didn't see any problem. It's interesting, you know what, [laugh] I think Christianity influenced me in being a BC member. And then black consciousness*

*influenced me in being a Christian...These things happened, like Christianity talks about loving people, then I said well what is this loving people? So I felt that I should do something to no: people, black people, to show that I really loved them. Then I had to do something for them...OK, then with Christianity, I cannot just love people, I need something, I need Christ, I need Christianity. So it's Christianity that enabled me to really love black people. So I didn't see any contradiction but some people saw a great contradiction.*

These two literacies', or social practices which involve practices of print, were mentioned by many students. Almost all students mentioned politics. Two said they had been politicised by the curriculum. But more commonly, students spoke about a decrease in political life on arrival at UCT. I shall focus briefly on Andile, one of the students who had become less involved since being at UCT.

He described himself as very sensitive, purposeful, energetic, thinking too much, afraid of getting left behind as he had after the school boycotts in Std 5. His best years were in the Ciskei, when he lived with his father, and was very involved in political work with the Dimbaza Youth Congress, where he had worked to help youth develop what he called 'pride of doing'. He saw this period as his 'youth achievement', meeting graduates, teachers, who expressed themselves well in English, while he struggled:

*I couldn't raise questions. I didn't have good English. And I felt that if I am able to convince people... for me to express it the way I want it, it goes in a very wrong direction. Maybe I produce the quarter of what I think I should say, but the whole thing which is in my heart which I know I can say, it doesn't come out, all of it, you know.*

He described how his father encouraged him to read, mainly political books: "In my room there were piles of New Nations."

*I don't feel like I'm left out from politics [at UCT]. I still believe that I'm in there also but...*

*LT: Being here doesn't mean that... you feel you can be in both at the same time?*

*Exactly. I'm not radical, but I'm just a person who wants things to go the way they should go. I like justice. I like justice.*

Nathan said at the beginning of his interview that he was 'raised in a Christian family'; for Robert, religion clearly played a very important part. There were other influences too: role models, caregivers, professional focus and sports.

Murray recognises the value that the notion of multiple literacies has for relativising our understanding of literacy in universities. She writes:

The notion of multiple literacies...enables us to see academic literacy in relation to other literacies and the way in which it influences and is influenced by other discourses (1993:4).

But I think that what becomes more interesting than listing literacies, is to see what activates the different discourses associated with different practices, and to see how students manage them. Someone like Mkhululi can put them aside and express himself in one without compromising the other. Robert cannot. He wonders whether it is politics that has raised this awareness of how to name things.

In this chapter I have changed perspective from literacies and discourses, collective concepts which organise similarities among people, to voice, or subjectivity, which locates meaning in the individual. This shift in perspective makes it easier to track and understand the way discourses rub against one another, and what individuals do about this. Locating meaning in the individual does not mean that I am down-playing the social, but trying to find a starting point that is more profoundly social, in that it deals with human action, what must surely be the heart of the social.

This analysis of the different literacies influencing students seems to me to take away some of the power that we assign to discourses. Gee and Halliday are right that non-traditional students will stick out as partial members, ironically bolstering the strength at the centre of the discourse. But a shift in perspective from the centre to the periphery, to where the individual is placed making sense of all these differences and transitions takes away the power of the centre. This is particularly relevant now, where in transition, the idea of mainstream is less secure, or at least being re-defined. Gees 'theorems' (1990:154-9) on literacy probably have greater relevance in societies where there is a more entrenched notion of mainstream in place.

One aspect of the transition that many students spoke of was the adjustment to a new medium of social communication. Although this is not directly related to academic writing, I believe that it warrants a special focus, because of what it indicates about the multiple identities of students--the different spheres of meaning in which they have to make sense of their worlds.

### Langone and Social Life

In the interviews, I did not focus specifically on the language question as an issue in the transition to UCT. That was an important part of the personal section of the assignment students had written in the Introduction to English course (see Chapter Three). Yet the language issue was often raised, not in the context of difficulties with academic writing as I would have expected, but as an aspect of social life, and the adjustments required of students. Most students mentioned language and social identity at some point in the interview.

Tsidi spoke about the way the need to speak English as a lingua franca for social purposes makes people forget their 'native' languages. She says:

*It's like maybe I meet someone, we're gonna talk English because it's the language we speak here, due to the environment, even though he or she speaks my language...You realise when the person speaks to another person in the language, oh, are you Tswana speaking. I can't just go and start speaking in Tswana, like if we meet I wouldn't be knowing if you know the language. I might just cause...I hate it also. Most Xhosa people are doing that. Like a person will come up to you and say 'Sawubona', that's the way they greet you. It's not that I don't understand but I can't respond. The problem is the response. It's not nice to come to me speaking a language that I can't understand.*

I asked Faith how she had adapted socially. Her response was:

*Socially...I've found...OK...I had a problem with Xhosas... Xhosa-speaking people. Initially...*

*LT: What's your mother tongue?*

*It's Sotho, ja. If you ask me most times I speak Sotho. But then you know in Jo'burg, we do mix. So I found it difficult with Xhosa-speaking people because, initially I used to tell myself, heh, that is one nation that is clear...but to my surprise when I came here, that wasn't true in fact. They prove me wrong in fact because they were tribalist, I mean they are tribalist even now, they like to isolate themselves, they like to dominate, so it was difficult for me to socialise with those kind of people and to be under.. you know, to be sitting in groups...like...OK, I'm going to socialise with people from Jo'burg because they won't find me difficult, unlike with Xhosas. But then as time went on some*

*started accepting us. But in groups they like dominating and don't want to give others a chance to talk.*

Peter is a Zimbabwean student. In response to my question about why he had chosen UCT, he said, "Life here is quite conducive, especially for academic purposes." He went on to describe what he had learnt in Anthropology classes about Soweto as a symbol of unity, while the Cape seemed to be much more divided. He said he had found things fairly easy because of his ability to compromise with languages:

*I think that if ever I did experience problems it was because of the language. Especially with Xhosa. The Xhosa are dominant people here... if you can compromise, they feel happy. We experience such things in res. We usually have this...although they're at a low profile... these ethnic...I might term them ethnic 'wars', in quotations.*

Robert says, "We have problems amongst ourselves." Tumelo's response to my question about the transition to UCT was:

*I'm now attached to Cape Town. Its like home to me. I'm part of the UCT community. I don't miss home too much. At first I felt like an alien...an outcast because I didn't know most of the languages I found on campus, excepting Sotho and Tswana. To me I thought every black student was a Xhosa-speaking somebody. So I just told myself I'd be a friend of my own and lock myself in my room.*

He is now in his second year, and looks back:

*Until the beginning of the second semester when I started to learn the language because I was closely getting to grips with other languages and closer to the people, and the thing that helped me to be in that position was the choir.*

He goes on to talk about his decision to register for Xhosa Intensive in 1993:

*At least I've grown as far as language is concerned. I always wanted to identify myself as an African and the most important thing for me that counts, it's language.*

Bongani, whose home language is Xhosa, said:

*There are many languages. I'm trying to know these African languages. I didn't even know their names. That worried me.*

This section gives some insight into one area of campus life that clearly mattered to students. It also raises some difficulties with the concept of voice in research.

At the level of content, it seems as though students are having to adjust to much more than problems with English as a medium of instruction. There are new registers/varieties for speaking English to native speakers, as well as to other African students. Many of the students I interviewed were preoccupied with finding a niche among fellow black students rather than seeking acceptance in the 'mainstream', ie, white middle class culture.

This supports the point made by Moll and Slonimsky that the curriculum in their ASP B.Ed course often seemed to pass students by. They say:

"Our course presupposes that [students] can identify aspects of course content which are worth pursuing...Certain kinds of thinking which are part of their everyday lives are deemed not to be part of normal academic practice...They in fact construct for themselves two different realities, their ordinary lives and their academic work"(1989: 161).

They make their point in the context of academic work. But these interviews seem to extend this dual reality to social life as well. The effort involved in learning other African languages and, in Tumelo's case, participating in UCT's 'Choir for Africa' (the reason why he had chosen to come to UCT) and in fact creating an African identity, has implications for students' academic work, not only because of the obvious overload of activities, but also because it suggests that students might be less concerned with making it in the mainstream than many of us would think. Alienation seemed to be more of an issue in relation to other black students, rather than in relation to the "whiteness" of the university itself.

This observation also makes more sense when linked to Mkhululi's and Robert's comments on referencing, about the ownership and exclusion conveyed by the convention, as well as what Mpho said about the fear of 'inciting' your tutor.

I would like to develop this point about language on campus by drawing on another source, one of the ELL103S essays I marked. The writer was not a member my research group. I quote from his essay:

*...I see it [English] as an excellent language in bringing various people together and also to enable them to communicate. But, on the other hand, I see it promoting inferiority versus superiority. It also detribalises people...*

*English is likely to divide the students into two groups. There are groups of students who like to express themselves in English everytime [sic]. To my surprise is that even those who can speak some vernacular language, they neglect it and speak English. I remember one day talking to a girl from Kwazulu who also schooled at Kwazulu. She asked me to speak English because she does not understand Zulu. I never knew that before, and it was only last month that I heard that she is one of the top Kwazulu students who passed Zulu with flying colours.*

This is an example of language acting as what Smolicz, in a lecture given at the University of the Western Cape, called an 'activator of difference'; in this case, revealing the intersection between language and class.

Homogeneous categories such as 'disadvantaged' are shaken up by the way in which students speak about divisions and conflict. One has to take into account the reality of ethnicity as a factor in students' lives. It also has implications for encouraging the use of languages other than English in groupwork.<sup>5</sup> But it is important to note that some students also spoke positively of what they had learnt through exposure to the language problem (see Faith and Tumelo's comments above).

The other points I want to make concern difficulties with the concept of voice in research. I raise these points here rather than in Chapter Two, as I am able to quote from the interviews to illustrate my points. Voices are unsettling and partial. An intelligent student like Faith talks about 'the Xhosa nation', and I want to intervene, but do not, and yet end up reporting her words without discussing them first.

Voice is also always in process. In the interviews there was a constant flux between what Rorty calls contingency and solidarity. Contingency refers to the way identity and point of view shift according to biography, or "lived situation in the world" (in Greene 1993:9) while solidarity is about reciprocity in a community where individuals share the same story. Mkhululi's observations about referencing on page ... support this very clearly.

Another point is that voice is also 'unreliable'. For instance, Tsidi tells me about Xhosa-speaking students greeting other students with 'Sawubona'. I know enough about African languages to know that that is Zulu: is she to be believed? Tumelo develops a wonderful metaphor for himself as being 'like a river' yet is it just to cover his boredom, and distract him

in the end of course evaluation students were asked to comment on the teaching methodology. One student wrote, You must try to enforce English to be the medium of communication in the groups because some people uses their mother tongues to discuss, of which we don't understand - otherwise abolish group work, please, please." Similar comments were made by other students.

from facing a more fundamental problem with his approach to writing? Voice itself is part of the discourse of the interview here. This is another reminder of the relationship between voice and discourse.

In spite of these ways in which access to experience was often difficult to interpret or take at face value, my overall impression was that students were remarkably aware and fluent when it came to describing their lives and transitions. The narratives seemed to be strongly in place; dates, characters, feelings and what made a particular period stand out in memory seemed to be sharply etched.

When Gee (1990) speaks of meta-awareness and learning as a point of power and urges teachers to know whether students have a learning or acquisition advantage on arrival at university, I believe that the students I interviewed have resources generated by the transitions they have had to make. It must be possible to translate this into the formal learning experience in universities.

Miller's study of bilingual learners draws to a close with this observation:

They are poised not stranded, and their position is mobile and is powerfully battered and buttressed from both sides. It is possible that young people positioned like this may be especially well placed to stand back from and deal positively with potential cultural conflict, by seeing their situation not in terms of one culture versus another, but in terms of the arbitrariness of each. Out of such perceptions could grow the possibilities of new critical attitudes... (1985:191).

Having seen voice as a way of approaching individual point of view or perspective almost exclusively at a content level, and touched on some of the implications for research, I focus on a different aspect of voice when I interview and analyse the writing of three students in the next chapter. This is a linguistic view of voice. With most students, there were traces of other social languages in the interviews. Other things are talking through the students.



## CHAPTER 5

### VOICES IN DISCOURSE

In this section, I attempt to bring discourse and voice together, having kept them apart somewhat artificially up to now. In both of the previous chapters, each of which represent key stages in the research, I recognised that the speaker or writer's voice was not monolithic. It is shaped and marked by the individual's immersion in social languages, or discourses.

The discourse of the university environment seemed to have been absorbed by Mpho, as he spoke of being able to "play around with concepts" at university; Andile's foregrounding of disadvantage reflects the same thing. Carol's sayings such as "they were plain lazy" and in her essay, "English has caused me a lot of heartache, but in the end it is for the best" seem to come from another source, unlikely to be from a formal learning setting. Perhaps the strongest example was provided by Robert, who talked about his reasons for choosing to write "Modimo" rather than "God" in a Religious Studies essay.

Wherever I looked, in both the interviews and the essays, there seemed to be more than one voice speaking. These voices are recognisable in the linguistic surface. At times I am able to interpret them because I share some of the context. So I am able to say, "That sounds like school/church/politics." The surface of the language reveals much.

In interpreting this linguistic notion of voice, I draw on the work of Vygotsky and, more importantly, Bakhtin, whose interdisciplinary focus offers much to education, though neither developed an extensive application of their ideas to this field.

The core of Vygotsky's thinking (1978) is that mind is socially constituted, through internalisation and transformation of social interactions. This takes place through semiotic mediation via language, that has been socioculturally shaped over time. Vygotsky's work has been interpreted and applied in learning situations involving modelling, particularly parent-child or teacher-pupil relationships (see for example Palincsar 1986).

Bakhtin's work extends Vygotsky into the a wider and deeper social realm, beyond an immediate situation involving two or more people interacting in a generally harmonious way, into a view of the social which involves difference and struggle for position. His early work involved an analysis of the novel, which he argued was 'dialogic' rather than 'monologic'. I quote from "The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse":

The author participates in the novel (he is omnipresent in it) with *almost no direct language of his owl*. The language of the novel is a *system* of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyse it as a single unitary language (in Lodge, 1988:130).

I find this view strikingly relevant to the position of the writer of academic discourse. The language of the individual speaking/writing is always peopled. This is the case quite literally with academic writing where voices are referenced.

Cazden (1992) and Wench (1991a and 1991b) have interpreted Vygotsky and Bakhtin for language education. Both argue that Bakhtin has made a particular contribution to the search for a way of analysing mediation which links inner and outer realities ie the psychological to the sociocultural. Both find Bakhtin's concept of voice flexible and powerful for this purpose. Voice is the 'speaking consciousness'—the individual speaking or writing-- which is always laden with the language of others, both utterances heard or read in previous contexts, and at the same time, oriented towards a future audience. This connectedness to the language of others is not consensual and peaceful. Bakhtin writes:

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated--with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions, is a difficult and complicated process (in Cazden 1992:198).

It is often conflictual, carrying an "aura" of values and intentions, and is simultaneously constrained by previous contexts, yet emergent, with some future response in mind.

Wertsch uses voice in a slightly different way, as a 'mode of discourse' (1991a:121) but still manifest in the individual at the point of utterance. He introduces the concept of the "privileged" voice (which I imagine as written with a capital V) which includes "public discourses" such as what he calls the "voice of decontextualised rationality". These are acquired through the decontextualised uses of language in institutional settings, particularly in formal schooling.

Another useful concept from Wertsch is what he calls "non-institutional experience statements" (1991b:128) meaning utterances which indicate a "shift to speech genres distinct from that which predominates in formal instructional activities".

I drew on Bakhtin's notion of voice as utterances laden with the voices of others in the third key stage in the research process. This stage involved a return to the ELL103S assignment. I read

the essays carefully, noting different discourse traces ("non-institutional experience statements"), bearing experience contexts mentioned in the interviews in mind. I selected essays which revealed this variety in the discourse to different degrees.

I chose the following students:

Tumelo, whose marks had not shifted at all in the course of the language component: as he put it, his marks "stood on one place", at 57% . He had also introduced an additional essay from his History 2 course for me to look at. During his initial interview, he had said:

*With this essay it's going to be totally different. That'll be the first time that with a clear conscience I write academically.*

He had clearly invested a great deal in the History essay and I wanted to see whether this commitment would be reflected in his writing. I was also interested in the characteristic 'signature' (Geertz's term for "a strong authorial presence within a text" 1988:9) to his language, both written and spoken.

Carol's assignment was excellent, in both the personal and academic sections, in spite of a high frequency of common English-Afrikaans errors. The two sections, (a) and (b), were also markedly different.

Robert was articulate and critical. He had done well in the assignment (70%) showing a steady improvement from 60% for the first essay. The personal section of his essay was surprisingly controlled. It was over-managed and rather flat whereas his interview had been vivid and open. His comments on language choice (Chapter Four) had sharpened my growing interest in the linguistic dimension of 'voice'.

The question underlying this stage of the research was:

How are the influences evident in the interviews visible in the writing?

#### Referencing and voice in a History essay

In the recorded discussion with Tumelo, we looked first at his History essay. He expressed deep disappointment at the mark he had been given (65%), and was critical of the feedback, which said "Good context but you should have included more analysis of tensions in the white

power bloc..." Tumelo criticised this assessment: how can the context be good if one has left out an important aspect? He said:

*This reminds me of no teacher tat school] who never said you've done a good thing... always but you should have...he's saying something and the next moment he deviates from it... you feel as if you can never be excellent.*

This is an extract from his History essay. The full text appears in Appendix F:

*Its reported that 10,000 people demonstrated in Evaton. Just about 18km from Evaton another group of people also gathered and marched to the local police station. People from Boipatong and Bophelong gathered and marched to Vanderbijlpark at Steelworks town police station. About 4,000 people took pan in this protest. In the same area in the Vaal, at a place called Sharpeville, named after the Major John Sharp, people also went to the local police station. About 5-7,000 demonstrators in Sharpeville went to the local police station in Sharpeville with no passes. We are traditionally told that people were just standing next to the police station. Among these people were woman, children, youth and man. These people as they waited for the answer from the police station were astonished to see military cars moving in. It is said that these people were so relaxed when this policemen and army cars came to Sharpeville.*

*What these people heard later was gunshots. People were running in all directions, mothers and children crying alike. The main street known as Seiso was full of people running for their lives while others were falling down as gunshots were heard. It is believed that about 69 people died while hundreds were injured. The injured people didn't go to the local clinic or Vereeniging hospital for they feared arrest at hospital.*

I learnt from my initial interview with Tumelo that he had grown up with stories about what had happened in of Sharpeville in 1961. Knowing this, the influence of other voices and the context in which they were heard was very clear to me. I asked Tumelo about his repetition of phrases like 'gathered and marched.' He said this was deliberate to build atmosphere. I asked him why he had named Boipatong and Bhopelong specifically. He explained that this is to show the range of people who were drawn into the conflict, the one representing 'criminals' the other more 'traditional' residents. To most readers, such as myself or his oral History expert lecturer, this careful choice would be lost. This naming of towns could be typical of the kind of formulaic phrases used in the oral narratives which are familiar to Tumelo in another context.

Others extracts seem to show traces of the same language: "...mothers and children were crying alike..." and "the main street known as Seiso..." which are vivid and turn him into a narrator,

sharing with the new audience, the person who will mark his essay, the detailed observations of an eye witness.

I think that a reading of this essay informed by knowledge of what matters to the writer, in particular his investment in this essay, reveals a diversity of voices, both past and future. From the past, his essay is imbued with the language of listening to oral stories with its aura, the 'speaking consciousness' that Bakhtin refers to. There is a set of values that accompanies this writing. Getting it right mattered deeply for this essay. Early on in my initial interview with him, he had said that he was definitely going back to live in the area : "It has sentimental value to me."

At the same time, he is juggling these voices from another context with those from the new environment into which he is trying to move 'with a clear conscience'. The referencing conventions he uses help, in part, to source the different voices that he is drawing on. The range of reporting clauses used indicate this diversity. He had approached his lecturer for advice on how to reference the oral sources encouraged by the essay topic. He was told to write "According to traditional sources...." He has added others, for example "It is told..." for traditional oral sources, while using "it is reported" for the new voices (with writing, rather than speaking authors) of the new audience for a story that would not normally enter the academic domain. He seems to be inserting himself as a mediator between the two (for example, 'main street known as Seiso') suggesting an awareness of both audiences, the new one being academic. Perhaps for the first time, he is telling the story himself, in the essay form, which traditionally he had been told.

There are cross currents of semantic content washing against each other here. The emergent quality of his writing has a dual focus, reaching back and ahead simultaneously. His (appropriate) response to the essay topic (drawing on his own sources) creates problems for him, which the conventions of referencing are not prepared for. The linguistic skin is being stretched. It does not know how to name new non-authored sources.

The emergent nature of language, what Bakhtin calls its 'responsivity', is emphasised for me by my opportunity to compare his History essay with the one he had written in ELL103S . When I asked why his language was so much better in the former, he said "I was taking the best of my language here." Perhaps the task, and his relationship with the person who would be reading the essay, meant that he engaged with the writing such that it mattered to his identity: he went into the task and gave it careful attention, rather than ducking underneath it.

When I asked him whether there was any conflict between the version he had grown up with, and those of the academic writers on the same topic, he said that they differed only in

perspective - the historians' versions "lacked detail" and animation. Neither Tumelo nor his lecturer seemd to have picked up that there is a potential conflict between the two versions, not at a content level, but at a deeper level. The oral context is narrative, the academic one argumentative. If topics are related, Tumelo will assume a superficial connection between different versions and their underlying approaches to knowledge construction.

Some of these features are also very clear in our analysis of his assignment for ELL103S, to which I now turn.

"Let's take a tour..."

In my analysis of part (a) of this assignment, the personal account of experience of English at UCT, I was struck by his strong personal style. I noticed for instance that he had used the phrase "Let's take a tour..." early on in both History and English essays. I asked him whether this phrase had a special meaning for him. He said:

*I like it a lot. Its like...this vision that I'm having, you take everything with you. When you take a tour, you take everything with you-lour provisions, your camera, your sleeping bag. You're going to explore...whatever.. Jou don't know what will happen to you...For me its not that easy to write. If I want to express, to engage myself I lack simple words. It's only that metaphoric language I have in mind.*

In part (a) of the assignment, there is a linguistic diversity that I commented on in the interview. I noticed phrases like 'he wanted to pull out' I and 'he made head on [contact] with English'. These phrases, he said, came from 'Things I've read...TV...conversations.' Most marked is a register shown in phrases such as "When he came to UCT he had a vision. His dream was to express himself well in English.." and "the fruits of this perseverance is clearly seen in his development of writing skills.." and " ...English has enriched his mind..." He said that his teacher used to talk like that.

1. Tumelo wrote this personal account in the third person pronoun, using 'he' throughout. I asked him why: *"I was trying to hide myself away...not easy for anyone to pick up that this was personal..I wanted to be like the one we practised in class what's his name again... Williams. I wanted to move closer to his point, his style of writing, so I used mostly undercover language.... "* I commented that his feelings still come across. He replied that this was deliberate. *"How can I put it...English itself, it affects me. So the way its taught and the way it develops me and the expectations I have of employment--some of it was not meant and so I felt this is me who is going to express my feelings but I am going to express them in a very hidden way, not clearly for one to pick really that he is mating a point like this."*

*I got inspired I mean by my teacher. He used to tell us that we should have visions of what the thing in the future will be for you in five...ten years to come. And you must always have your dreams about what you want and what are your aspirations and this dream encapsulate things like your goal, what you want to achieve in such a period whether it be intermediate, short term or long term...and your goals should be very realistic...not fooling yourself that you want to be a doctor knowing that you don't know how to do calculus or whatever..."*

His soccer coach also seems to have made an impression on him:

*...In fact maybe, ja, I was fortunate at soccer, our manager, he used to enrich our minds...I mean he said to me that I am a perfectionist and perfectionists are always failures and I asked him what he meant...so such things were rooted in me. I have to visualise things and have dreams.*

There are clear voices of teachers. Other traces which I did not talk to him about in the interviews are a language from university seen in the burgeoning academic discourse ('manifests itself', 'the latter') and the foregrounding of second language as in "One need not to forget that English is a second language to this young man..."

I learnt from previous interviews (group and individual) that he had been a primary school teacher. This identity is reflected in this paragraph from his essay, in which he gives an unflattering evaluation of the ELL103S course:

*Although he seems to enjoy the course lately he is still not satisfied with the format or structure of the course in general...he still feels that more could be done to improve its outlook, for to him, its still a kind of replica of ASP. Improvements could lead to high attendance and there will be no need for registers to be marked daily.*

A more subtle version of this can be seen in part (b) of Tumelo's English essay. This involved outlining an argument about language put forward by James Tollefson,<sup>2</sup> whose aim is to show that English has become a gatekeeper to power in education in particular. He is also concerned with explaining *how* this has come about. Some students did not pick up on the latter part of his argument. Tumelo partly acknowledged this in his concluding sentence: he wrote "Because of its heavy influence it shapes ones education and determines its destiny."

2.The article was the introductory chapter to J.Tollefson's "Planning Language, Planning Inequality" (1991).

We discussed this in the interview:

*I read the whole thing [Tollefson]*

*LT: Did you like it?*

*I liked it a lot. He's saying things like...Wally Serote. ..he's saying the same thing...it's familiar... not too far away. And most of the poems that I've done are saying the same thing. And the books that I've read always say that. And newspapers. Basically what I understood is that he was saying to us that education is the major thing that will shape and govern your life... and make it either prosperous or not.*

Later in the interview he said:

*So for one to have better things is to know both languages and by knowing the two you'll be engaging yourself in education so education will be opening those doors, I mean employment doors.*

*LT: That's your belief?.*

*That's my belief.*

*LT- Because what I thought was happening is that your belief was getting in the way of what Tollefson was saying. You don't say anything about what Tollefson says about why English has come to be like this. It's like you left that out.*

*I left it because, well number one, the limited space we were given. If \_like... you know me I think by now, I like to talk a lot. I don't just write. I go deep into it and explore it.*

*I find this section of our discussion interesting for two reasons. First, instead of listening affirmingly, I challenged Tumelo about his belief getting in the way of Tollefson's view. Tumelo dodges this, blaming the limited space, and appealing to my knowledge of him and his desire for depth. The second point is that there seems to be something like voice in the way Wertsch uses it, with a capital V, a voice of the promise of education, which overrides Tollefson, so that Tumelo fails to pick up Tollefson's argument. This same voice homogenises other voices, Serote and others, into one voice which says that education is powerful. He failed to see that there was anything new in what Tollefson was saying.*



His belief about education was more strongly weighted than what Tollefson was saying. This is possibly deepened by his professional experience of having been a teacher. Yet at the same time, he is critical and receptive in certain contexts, as shown in his comments about the ELL103S course. Recchio (1991) is interesting on competing voices in student writing. He suggests that students as inexperienced writers have great difficulty seeing how out of classroom discourses intersect and often clash with new classroom discourses. Talking to Tumelo, he seemed to be highly conscious of these different discourses, but perhaps less aware of the way they are rooted in different understandings. He saw little conflict between oral versions and those of the readings, or between what Serote says or Tollefson says. Recchio suggests that we assist students to:

...locate the multiple competing/interanimating discourses and their points of intersection, help objectify them and weigh the explicit claims of each, placing those in relation to claims in the reading (1991:447).

He stresses that the purpose here is not to make students choose between discourses but to *manage* them better if their own voice is to emerge. He also points out that often ironically, before a writer can make sense of an author, the author's place needs to be expanded in the essay, "to stimulate further dialogue by providing a voice against which the student can sound her own" (1991:452). I think this applies to Tumelo.

It is interesting to compare Tumelo with the other students I interviewed.

#### Keeping the voices apart for fear of plagiarism

Robert's second section, the outline of Tollefson's argument, was characterised by an overuse of reporting clauses such as 'he says', 'he regards', 'he went on to say'. I was trying to understand this.

*LT: What I want to know is did Tollefson's analysis make sense to you? Was it familiar?*

*Ah, no. It wasn't familiar. It was son of like new information. And I had a problem with it. Like what was the motive. Maybe Tollefson's analysis is for people to decide whether they are in favour of what's happening in Namibia, you know, like whether they support SWAPO's actions or not. So if it comes to people like me, what can I do with it?*

Later in the interview I asked:

*LT: Do you think it makes it easier...?*

*Keeping myself out of Tollefson's argument? Its easier for me if I have to compare my personal views with someone else's views. Unlike if I mix the two. It won't be easy for me to have clear evidence. Like when I have to compare the two. The first one is mine and the second is Tollefson's.*

*LT: OK, that's for this task. But if you were summarising someone else's argument in a Political Studies essay, do you do the same kind of thing?*

*Ja, you see the problem here is I'm too scared of plagiarism. So I have to be sure like I make it clear that this is not mine and I'm not trying to write as if it's my own view... So to make someone see that, OK he's not stealing someone's words here. If maybe at the end of the sentence I don't quote, then I'll be in danger. You see I'm used to being clear with someone's words because that's the way we work here. Like every essay we write you mustn't take someone's words as if it's yours, like plagiarism...you might end up being excluded or taken to court, something like that.*

*What I realised here is even things which are clear to be seen, the one whose marking...I don't know if they make as if they don't know what's happening...but they want you to be clear. Like if you say something and they want you to explain it, they say 'Who said so?' All over my assignments are written 'Who said so? Whose words is this?'*

Robert seems to have the voices clearly sorted out, knowing where he begins and ends.

*LT: But you still...you don't avoid saying 'I think'*

*Oh I know what I think. But you as a reader you won't know whose saying that. So to show you, to be clear enough, I have to write 'I', 'I think' or 'my view is', so that it's clear that that's my opinion. I don't take someone else's.*

For Robert the effort of separating the voices is successful but exhausting. He seems to be wrestling with voices to bring them under control. At different points in my relationship with him, he mentioned that he was 'good academically but bad socially', that the way he worked was verging on 'self-abuse'. He described the transitions in his life, from a rural background that he was ashamed of, to a township school where he had hidden his origins by controlling conversations so that he would not have to reveal anything.

Carol seems to represent a middle position. We looked together at her writing in the personal section, (a), of the assignment.

I remembered that when she had handed her essay in to me in class, she said that she had found the personal essay difficult. In the follow-up interview, I asked her why. (My assumption had been that students would find it easier writing in the 'I-mode'.) She replied:

*It's very difficult to write about yourself in the sense that you have to write, someone else is going to read it--how personal could one get? And for the other one, the summary, that wasn't my words, I mean, the thing was in from of me, all I had to do was get the main point out of it and put it down so that wasn't difficult for me actually...we had to do quite a lot of exercises in ASP doing summarising... Certain points you hold back...at first, I wanted to hold back, but certain points you think are important and someone should notice it. I think that on ASP and how I felt about it. I thought to myself that people are gonna read this and they'll think something bad about me...I didn't want to put this on paper.*

She seems to be quite comfortable with others' words. In terms of Gee's learning or acquisition distinction (1990), she seems to have an acquisition advantage over Robert. This impression is reinforced by this extract from later in the discussion. I asked her about the influence of Tollefson in a phrase she had used in her essay. She said:

*I think there's a bit of both. I was trying to put my ideas forward to conclude my essay and I thought about Tollefson's article on the same issue and I actually brought that into my conclusion... it could be his style of language but also mine because I tend to be neutral about politics and discussing it. But every day we... my friend and L.. are discussing these things about politics and getting into heavy debates and this style of language also comes up. It wasn't new for me. Like it's not as if I didn't know what 'coercive' was and had to go and look it up in a dictionary. It's a word I would use.*

She is comfortable with the discourse. The difficulty for her is with personal writing and decisions about what to mask or reveal. This confirms the analysis of the personal writing aspect of the assignment (see Chapter Three).

Conscious or unconscious?

I draw to her attention that she had started her personal essay with "Being a second language speaker". She said that she was unaware of this.

*Things I didn't actually consider important can bring out the value of it. I didn't actually notice anything.*

*I think it's fascinating how someone else can actually see how you are writing.*

This response makes an interesting comparison with Robert. When I asked him the same question--whether he had been conscious of beginning his essay "Since I am from a DET school..."--he said that he did not know how else to begin.

*If! begin like this then you'll know What to expect...to give you like ...*

LT: A frame?

*Ja. This is important because it shows there is a gap between DET and UCT, you see, and that gap determines my academic position and how I cope with the situation at UCT... if they were at the same level then you see there won't be any problem. There wouldn't be a need to foreground it. But there's a gap between like me being a DET at*

*is the bottom line so I want to put it so that it's foregrounded..*

LT: Are you comfortable with that?

*Ja, sure, I mean that's a fact.*

This shows a great deal of insight and language awareness on Robert's part. Carol might not have been aware of starting her essay with "Being a second language speaker..." but she showed strong insight into issues of language and identity in this extract. I had asked her about a phrase she had used in her assignment, "another victim of the apartheid regime". She said:

*I actually hear people saying they are victims of the apartheid regime or people mocking other people saying 'I can see what the Nationalist Party did to you' and that tends to reflect on my...not actually my opinion...but in my general discussion and general use of language...that tends to come up because it's so closely associated with me every day.*

I am at the limits of my shared meaning framework in interpreting this comment, and would need to have a better understanding of 'coloured' identity to do so. The way in which stretches of language are associated with particular contexts, in this case, an ironic way of defining identity, is also evident in this section below in which Carol describes an incident she had written about in her essay. Here the fact that she was speaking Afrikaans became an activator of difference.

*Mmmm-ja that was also quite hilarious. I was phoning home and speaking Afrikaans to my mother when a group of people came by...I was standing at the foyer at the library...it's quite silent there you know...your voice could be heard quite loud and I was speaking to my mother and they came down the stairs and actually stood still and stared at me like I was speaking a...I don't know if they don't know Afrikaans or what their feelings were about Afrikaans...maybe it's because they don't often hear it. Whenever I do hear it spoken it's like being in a foreign country and you suddenly hear someone speaking your language and you feel ... phew.*

Then more seriously later on in the discussion she said:

*I think that the main thing was actually whoever reads this should be aware of things, especially the Afrikaans issue on campus and to actually hold that to myself won't do anything good. To tell someone, or to write about it will perhaps indirectly do something about the issue or make people aware of what's going on.*

### Agency

I think that the most valuable part of this return to ask students to source the traces of discourses that appeared in their writing, the multiple voices that interanimate their writing, was the insight the discussions gave into the problem of agency in student writing. Much of this debate has taken place in American community colleges, where there seems to be more space to think about writing for goals such as righting wrongs, responsible/critical citizenship (depending on your politics), self-improvement, empowerment or self-expression. Writing programmes attached to South African universities are under pressure to deliver academic discourse. There is usually little patience with more expressive writing.

The prevailing social constructivist view has tended to cast doubt on authenticity and agency of the writer, arguing that writers have little control over their voices, and that they will speak unconsciously with the languages of the discourse communities in which they are participating.

Fulwiler (1990) quotes Bartholomae's strong statement that we "write in a history that is not of the author's own invention" (214). Spellmeyer (1989) and Faigley (1989) throw the same doubt on the notion that there is a coherent, stable "I" from which people speak, pointing out instead that the self in discourse is caught up in a process of making and being made by language.

Much of my research has, I think, shown something along these lines. The difficulties of the 'speaking I' in discourse, whether in the essay or in the interview, situated among already existing languages which are not harmonious or unitary, have been a common theme. Yet there is something else too. By this stage in the research process, I was more aware of the individual in a range of different situations over time. There was Tumelo, with two very different essays, one an academic declaration of intent, the other an evasive, rushed piece of work. His agency/authenticity was differently engaged in the two tasks. Carol was highly conscious of certain things in certain situations, and Robert was able to do complex exercises in voice management, although on the surface his writing looked empty of personal signature

At the end of a comprehensive review essay on composing and agency, Flannery concludes by highlighting the dilemma of teachers who recognise that classrooms are "no pure pedagogical space" (1991:703) and that the intrusion of the social and political context makes one question the autonomy of the writer, and yet they also take their classroom roles and activities very seriously. She asks whether the awareness of the former 'intrusions' about the complex ways in which writers function in the world:

...threaten to take us too far away from the compelling and immediate circumstances of *a student and a piece of paper*. But it may also be that to think only in terms of the student and the piece of paper is to return to the notion of the autonomous subject and fail to reflect on what we have too long taken for granted" (1991:713, emphasis mine).

Edelsky holds a similar position and argues that taking on the idea that social life is constructed rather than given-- "interrogating the taken for granted" (1991:11)--itself opens up possibilities for agency, and doing things differently.

But Giddens, on a quest to "recover the 'I'" (1987:207), is critical of the failure of poststructuralist theory to deliver any real possibility for action. He argues that the "author is a producer working in specific settings of practical action" (219) and that the real issue is the "process of using words and phrases in contexts of social conduct" (209). This observation takes me back to my definition of discourse in Chapter Three, where discourse is shared meaning in context, with no automatic assumption that participants have (or possibly even want to have) equal access to the ways with words of that particular context.

This analysis has shown the variable, contextual nature of agency; but spending time with students, and looking in different ways at where participation has mattered, and where other things have been more important, has restored the centrality of agency in the moment of 'a student with a piece of paper'.

I conclude this chapter with some comments—asides really—from Carol, while we were discussing her assignment:

*I'm enjoying this. It's fascinating how words...how phrases can actually sum up what you're saying and can pinpoint.*

*It's difficult discussing your own work with no outside views coming in. Like just now when we were discussing my article I was quite fascinated how some words can actually influence other people.*

Her comment about the value of "outside views coming in" brings me back to the beginning, to mediation and curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

### KEEPING THE CONVERSATION OPEN

I began this research project with the intention of looking again at EAL students as writers in a university environment which is changing rapidly, even if only on the surface. This ethnographic process has changed the way I think about my role as initiator of marginal students into university discourse. I have become more interested in how to keep that conversation open to include new students.

In Chapter Three, I came to an uneasy definition of discourse *as a process of meaning exchange via language in a given context. Individuals have differing access to these patterns of exchange in different social contexts.* I put the shared meaning dimension of discourse together with the unequal access perspective. The definition is uneasy because the 'shared meaning' and 'unequal access' components of my definition are in tension with one another; there is a built-in exclusive dimension to shared meaning. Someone will usually be left out. This conclusion is an attempt to link these two dimensions together.

In some ways my research seemed to show that there was little genuine exchange in many situations: I have described and interpreted instances involving misunderstood tasks, referencing obscuring students' agency in writing, and complex cultural and political contexts which have led to well-intentioned lecturers being unable to understand their students. All these observations contribute to a picture of a chronic mismatch between what lecturers think might be happening in their classes, and what is actually taking place.

But on the other hand, there are equally positive insights into agency, when students have fully engaged in attempts at shared meaning on different terms. Examples are Tumelo's History essay and Robert's insertion of the Sesotho term "Modimo" instead of "God" in his Religious Studies essay, as well as Andile's and Carol's openness in writing about their experiences of English at UCT.

I also observed that in describing their transitions, students often displayed remarkable insight and ability to analyse, balance and evaluate events and experiences.

These are qualities that are much sought after in an academic environment. Yet they are often left out of the academic conversation because non-traditional students in particular, do not feel comfortable about participation. This diminishes the conversation. If it is to be kept open and alive, and in some real way to be part of the reconstruction of shared meaning, there have to be changes to how we think about discourse.



I believe that the central curriculum concern for teachers who are in a similar position of mediating between marginal students and academic discourse, is to return to the distinction between acquiring and learning a social language or discourse.

Although I have criticised Gee's deterministic approach to 'Discourses' because it fails to reveal the creativity of individuals making their way through multiple discourses, I think his insights into the relationship between acquisition and learning processes where discourses are concerned, are profound and hopeful. I quote:

Acquisition is good for performance, learning is good for meta-level knowledge. Acquisition and learning are differential sources of power: acquirers usually beat learners at performance, learners usually beat acquirers at talking about it...(1990:146).

He urges teachers to recognise the difference between the two in their classrooms, and more importantly, to see "which student has acquired what" so that those who have an acquisition advantage (generally middle class English speakers) will not be further privileged over students who come in with different cultural capital. From this research, I believe that the students I interviewed have a learning advantage which, if acknowledged, can regenerate the academic conversation.

This means that we have to think about learning in different ways. The educational psychologist, Ausubel, summarises his findings over the years in this way: the most important thing for a teacher to find out is "what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly" (in Reilly 1985:122). We have to understand this knowledge as more than content in the formal curriculum. (Has this student covered the syllabus?) There are other domains of knowledge and experience that have yet to be mapped out.

I shall briefly examine the implications of re-thinking shared meaning in three different places: research, research-as-curriculum and curriculum.

### Research

The ethnographic methodology I chose was an attempt at moving the locus of interpretation closer to students--most simply put, an attempt at research with, rather than research on students.

There were difficulties with this way of working, which I elaborate on in Chapter Two. I found the issues of power and ethics to be particularly complex.

While acknowledging the problems with this kind of research, there were also changes in my own thinking as a result of this limited joint exploration. Not only do I have new respect for the management of transitions that the students I worked with had achieved, but also a greater awareness of my own biography and how that helps to maintain (or obscure) understandings. I had a small taste of what Heath (1983) describes in her detailed ethnographies of communication, discovering how teachers and students can 'bridge their different ways'.

The recent interest in ethnography in this country, for example, Morphet (1993), Dison (1993) and Leibowitz (1993), seems to represent a search for new voices in old debates.

This kind of research has an important role to play in developing a fuller description and understanding of what the other realities and non-school experiences of traditionally excluded students have been. Some examples would be politics and religion, oracy and deeper issues of identity construction. Since we give weight to the idea of educational disadvantage, it is part of our responsibility to see what other areas of experience have been meaningful, and to begin to understand how they affect students' entry into, or avoidance of, the academic conversation.

My attempt at ethnographic research reached a point where I felt that I had gone as far as I could in the limited time available. It is students themselves who are best positioned to document and interpret the transitions and practices involved in academic literacy. But they may not choose to do so. Some of these practices might remain hidden. This focus on the value for students leads to the next point.

### Research-as-curriculum

This research took place in the curriculum as well as outside of it. This has made me think differently about the traditional distinction between teaching and research, particularly at the first year level. I saw this most clearly in Robert's comments quoted at the end of Chapter Two. I also felt that there was a marked difference between what was possible in the classroom and in the more relaxed research process. This has blurred the distinction between the two, so that I am considering ways of engaging first year students in research. I think that there is no better way of constructing an acquisition-rich experience than involving students in research from as early as possible.

There are exciting possibilities here. Morphet's work (1993) is an interesting example. The way monolingual students with an acquisition headstart exchanged skills with multilingual first years, with a different advantage which would not normally be recognised in the UCT context, seems in this case to have led to a new respect for each other. Authentic meaning exchange becomes possible.

### Curriculum

I have begun to think of curriculum in terms of shared meaning, and find it useful to apply the concept of discourse as defined in Chapter Three to curriculum. But not in the static, descriptive way in which I used the term initially.

I shall attend to three areas of curriculum in academic literacy courses such as 'Introduction to English' and English for Academic Purposes, as well as mainstream curricula, which have been highlighted by this research. They are 1) *task design*, 2) *referencing* and 3) *evaluation*.

1) *Task design* is beginning to receive attention as a crucial aspect of curriculum design. It is the point at which lecturer's expectations are interpreted and taken up by learners. In a shared meaning framework, it is clearly important: if learners interpret the task differently from those who set and mark it, there is little possibility of common understanding ensuing in the relationship between writer and marker.

This was apparent in the task I designed in the Introduction to English course. The personal component, (a), confused some students who then had to struggle with the groundrules of this new kind of task. Had the audience changed? Should they take risks and say what they really thought, when marks were at stake? My lack of insight into the way language functions in a social semiotic manner limited the possibility for shared meaning.

There is a healthy change taking place in the way tasks are designed in the Social Sciences. There are more tasks involving engagement with issues such as sexual harrassment and racism on the campus. These allow for other views to be introduced and for the limits of the discourse to be stretched. But the broader context needs to be very carefully interpreted if these tasks are to be genuinely open. Students will continue to take fewer risks where marks are involved, and to worry about the consequences of exposure. And lecturers will need to develop better ways of interpreting the linguistic surface as discourses emerge in sometimes chaotic ways at the point where the individual enters the given language of discourse.

The History 2 essay written by Tumelo (see Chapter Five) also raises interesting considerations about task design and shared meaning. The choice of topic (consequences of the Sharpeville uprising in 1961) enabled Tumelo to draw on personal experience in writing this essay. In fact, this was encouraged by his tutor. However, his attempt introducing knowledge acquired in an oral context did not work to his advantage. Neither did he know how to reference these new sources.

2) *Referencing*. In this research the convention of referencing has emerged as a central concern, both from students in the interviews talking about the restrictions it places on them, and in my analysis of their writing where it is used as a surface signal of having managed disparate voices. A deep study of referencing from a social semiotic perspective would be a valuable contribution to curriculum.

One of the important ways in which shared meaning (discourse) is created and sustained in academic writing is through common access to others' views, available through the convention of referencing.

Changing the task so that other sources and ways of knowing are encouraged will mean changing the linguistic surface. Does one still name individuals, if the sources are oral? What check or validation is there if a student writes "according to traditional sources..."? Does this form of referencing have the same authority as the named author? These issues challenge the power of the author and text in academic writing.

3. *Evaluation* is the final aspect of curriculum that I consider. Many of the writers referred to in this dissertation argue strongly for the need to teach students how to identify and manage different discourses (Faigley 1989, Recchio 1991, Fairclough 1992b). It seems to me as if arguments for teaching meta-knowledge of this kind have almost replaced the old orthodoxy of the place of canonical knowledge in the curriculum. While I am in broad agreement with this argument (after all, it also creates space for the kind of knowledge that traditionally excluded students may have) there are important consequences that have not been properly examined. Evaluation is one.

An emphasis on 'how' rather than 'what' to learn needs a common language that becomes part of the evaluation process, specifically the feedback dimension of evaluation. How is this kind of knowledge to be built? How is it to be shared? If a perceptive and sympathetic person such as Tumelo's History lecturer, himself an oral historian, fails to recognise the discourse mix in

Tumelo's essay, there is a problem. This is an area for research in the future. Paxton (1993), for instance, has explored this issue. An ethnographic approach to shared meaning between learners and teachers would be valuable. This will make it possible for students to verify the kind of patterns teachers might identify in their discourse.

My conclusion remains tentative in that I believe that a joint perspective on language which holds structure and agency together in permanent tension is required at all times. However, I believe that the voice perspective, the individual as agent, has primacy in times when shared meaning is most important, but more difficult to obtain. As long as voice is taken seriously, we see the heterogeneity of language, and therefore its possibilities.

University of Cape Town

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- D: Student profiles
- E: Transcript of interview (Robert)
- F: History 2 essay (Tumelo)
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## APPENDIX A :

Selections from materials used in ELL103S

University of Cape Town

## Lesson 1

- examples of texts from the University community

University of Cape Town

# ACCESS to SERVICES - 2 approaches

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



## Student Advice Office

Postal Address: Students' Union  
University of Cape Town  
Private Bag Rondebosch 7700  
Telephone (021) 650-3533/6  
Fax (021) 650-3726

19 August 1993

Dear Bursary-Holder

The times that I will be available for advances and refunds will be as follows.

Monday	13h30	-	16h00
Tuesday	09h00	-	12h30
Thursday	09h00	-	12h30
Friday	13h30	-	16h00

However, I will be available to see you at any time for other problems.

Yours sincerely

Neil Cole

(A)

(B)

### UCT LIBRARY

JAGGER LEVEL ENTRANCE: MONDAY - FRIDAY

8:00 - 22:00

### SATURDAYS

8:30 - 12:00

SHORT LOAN CENTRE: WEEKDAYS

8:30 - 10:00

N.B: LESLIE ENTRANCE OPENS FROM 8:30 - 13:00

# UNIVERSITY DISCOURSE

(1.)

## WHY ARE THE SCHOLARS STRIKING?

Cosas respects the right of the teachers to strike for a living wage and for job security, and realises that the problem lies with this Nationalist Government, and not with the teachers, or their Union, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union.

\* Therefore, Cosas has decided to exert pressure on this Nationalist Government through strike action themselves, which will hopefully bring about the victory of the teachers faster.



A student is arrested in Cape Town after striking for a living wage for teachers.

picture by Yunus Mohamed (SOUTH)

Vivienne Carelse is arrested following her participation in strike action in Cape Town.



picture by Yunus Mohamed (SOUTH)

## WHAT ABOUT THE STUDENTS? THEY WILL FAIL THEIR EXAMS!

Apartheid education has always tampered with the education of the oppressed in South Africa. Classes are over-crowded, sometimes with as many as 65 students in a class. This means that students are not receiving individual attention, and that the education is not satisfactory. Students do not have proper access to text-books and scientific equipment, as well as sports facilities and other resources common in white government schools.

While this does not mean that students would have failed their exams anyway, it does mean that students also have problems with the education departments, and their needs and concerns about the quality of their education in comparison with that of their white fellow students, are certainly legitimate.



Vice-Chancellor

University of Cape Town · Private Bag Rondebosch 7700  
Telephone (021) 650-2105/6 · Fax No: (021) 650-2138 · Telex 5-22208  
Internet: aasvc@bremner.uct.ac.za.

TO ALL STAFF AND STUDENTS

September has been identified as a month to emphasise peace and for all to commit themselves to it. September 2 will be the start of the National Peace Campaign, organised by the Peace Accord. I believe we should all support the call for peace and participate in as many activities promoting peace, as is possible. I encourage you to wear blue ribbons on Thursday, September 2 and to take part in the minute's silence at noon, and the five-minute standstill. The Peace Song will be played on television and radio after the minute's silence.

A march by some student and staff groupings at the University may take place on Thursday after a lunch-time meeting at which there will be speeches calling for peace. I will be taking up the need for UCT, as a whole, to express itself even more strongly in support of peace, within days, and will be consulting widely to determine the best strategy to achieve that aim.

I hope you will give your whole-hearted support to the National Peace Campaign.

DR S J SAUNDERS  
Vice-Chancellor

31 August 1993



## Lesson 2

.'apprentice' + 'expert'

University of Cape Town

# Apprentice + 'expert': Who's Who in academic writing?

R. Mokocna (UCT student)

A

Everybody has their own culture. I am a Tswana by birth and I was born in the family which believes in the ancestors as it was carried from generation to generation. My family used to perform rituals. I was familiar with the culture and knew what was required of me. But somehow I changed.

Actually in life, if you are exposed to so many things, you will change, even if you can stick to your culture. But somehow you become slightly different unaware, and what tastes good, you will stick to. What I can tell is that my culture is mixed. I am not a real Tswana girl who can still wear cultural clothes and go to fetch some water and wood. I am influenced by other cultures and that is because of the school.

The thing is that in schools you get to be exposed to more than one culture. But it goes hand in hand with sacrifice, because what you are doing in your situation is not what is happening in some other peoples'. Lets take for example whites and blacks institutions. We find that the language being used is English.

So in conclusion what I have been exposed to has really changed my culture.

R. Williams

B. 'Culture'

Both the problem and the interest of the sociology of culture can be seen at once in the difficulty of its apparently defining term: 'culture'. The history and usage of this exceptionally complex term can be studied in Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) and Williams (1958 and 1976). Beginning as a noun of *process*—the culture (cultivation) of crops or (rearing and breeding) of animals, and by extension the culture (active cultivation) of the human mind—it became in the late eighteenth century, especially in German and English, a noun of *configuration* or *generalization* of the 'spirit' which informed the 'whole way of life' of a distinct people. Herder (1784-91) first used the significant plural, 'cultures', in deliberate distinction from any singular or, as we would now say, unilinear sense of 'civilization'. The broad pluralist term was then especially important in the nineteenth-century development of comparative anthropology, where it has continued to designate a whole and distinctive way of life.

But there are then fundamental questions about the nature of the formative or determining elements which produce these distinctive cultures. Alternative answers to these questions have produced a range of meanings, both within anthropology and in general: from the older emphasis on an 'inferior' or 'primitive' or 'religious or national' to more recent 'lived culture' or 'other'.

feedback:

B. 23%  
defined culture out of personal context  
Passive - how it was used mentioning it  
as the "process" at first level, formal piece  
of writing, because there are references  
No usage of pronouns. The vocabulary  
is difficult, because he sees culture as  
something very complex  
PASSIVE WRITING

Name:

# Apprentice + 'expert': Who's Who in academic writing?

R. Mokocna (UCT student)

A

Everybody has their own culture. I am a Tswana by birth and I was born in the family which believes in the ancestors as it was carried from generation to generation. My family used to perform rituals. I was familiar with the culture and knew what was required of me. But somehow I changed.

Actually in life, if you are exposed to so many things, you will change, even if you can stick to your culture. But somehow you become slightly different unaware, and what tastes good, you will stick to. What I can tell is that my culture is mixed. I am not a real Tswana girl who can still wear cultural clothes and go to fetch some water and wood. I am influenced by other cultures and that is because of the school.

The thing is that in schools you get to be exposed to more than one culture. But it goes hand in hand with sacrifice, because what you are doing in your situation is not what is happening in some other peoples. Lets take for example whites and blacks institutions. We find that the language being used is English.

So in conclusion what I have been exposed to has really changed my culture.

\* These symbols are interpreted below

B. 'Culture'

R. Williams

Both the problem and the interest of the sociology of culture can be seen at once in the difficulty of its apparently defining term: 'culture'. The history and usage of this exceptionally complex term can be studied in Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) and Williams (1958 and 1976). Beginning as a noun of process – the culture (cultivation) of crops or (rearing and breeding) of animals, and by extension the culture (active cultivation) of the human mind – it became in the late eighteenth century, especially in German and English, a noun of configuration or generalization of the 'spirit' which informed the 'whole way of life' of a distinct people. Herder (1784–91) first used the significant plural, 'cultures', in deliberate distinction from any singular or, as we would now say, unilinear sense of 'civilization'. The broad pluralist term was then especially important in the nineteenth-century development of comparative anthropology, where it has continued to designate a whole and distinctive way of life.

But there are then fundamental questions about the nature of the formative or determining elements which produce these distinctive cultures. Alternative answers to these questions have produced a range of meanings, both within anthropology and in other fields: it: from the older emphasis on an 'informing spirit' or religious or national – to modern 'lived culture' or other aspects.

feedback:

23% Self-expressive & identity; Subjective  
i.e. active in the process, but also objective  
e.g. I am influenced... Keep a distance between  
Self and other e.g. "You" & "Your" but in a way  
include Self in a form of generalization.

possible attitudes, feelings (How culture the writer is)

Name:

## Lesson 3

- different styles of academic register

University of Cape Town

# Different styles within 'academic' register

ELL103S  
Sept 1993



NB/ for assignment 3 - put  
the section 3 of  
Tollefson's  
article.

## More texts (more difficult to position)

### BOKAMBA (1983)

Admittedly, the number of English speakers in Africa will increase steadily as the use of English as a compulsory school subject expands. Fishman et al. (1977) have amassed impressive statistics on the spread of English in the world, showing that, among other things, English is becoming one of the most important languages in Africa with regard to mass media, international communication, and education. In education, for example, Fishman et al. (1977: 16) report that 47.1 percent of primary school students and 96.9 percent of those in secondary schools throughout Africa are enrolled in English classes. These are the highest percentages on any continent, according to the authors.

But they do not say anything about the number of speakers. This number, contrary to Mazrui's (1975) claim regarding the growth of what he terms "Afro-Saxons," will remain very small for some time to come, for several reasons. First, except in an infinitesimally small number of interracial families where English is the language of communication at home (Mazrui 1975), African speakers learn English at school and use it for very specific functions: education, official business (including office work, administration, and commerce), international diplomacy, and broadcasting. Broadcasting is also carried out in African lingua francae (e.g., Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba in Nigeria; Akan, Ga, and Ewe in Ghana; Swahili and Kikuyu in Kenya), as is daily communication. Second and third, the mastery of English is not possible until about the third year in secondary school, and there are very few qualified teachers to effectively implement the use of English as the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Under these conditions, it is not surprising to find so many deviations from Standard English in African English.

from "The Africanization of English"

- As a group, position Bokamba + Tollefson along the continuum.

Notice: • nature of evidence

- how we are aware of the person behind the writing

2

### TOLLEFSON (1991)

#### CASE: XUMA AUALA

Xuma Auala is a 12-year-old black child living in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, ruled from 1920 to 1990 by South Africa in a colonial arrangement condemned by the United Nations and most world governments (see Mazrui and Tidy 1984). Because his father is a minor official in the Namibian bureaucracy, Xuma has the chance to attend secondary school, a rare event for blacks, most of whom never attend school at all. Indeed, the most striking effect of the apartheid system of education in Namibia is the rate at which black children leave school. In the 1970s, only 58 per cent of more than 40,000 who enrolled in the first year of elementary school began the second year; and fewer than 100 individuals made it to the final class (Duggal 1981).

Like his father before him, Xuma must speak, read, and write both Afrikaans and English if he wishes to continue in school. As the Namibian lingua franca imposed by South Africa, Afrikaans is the language of most secondary instruction, though English is used in a few schools, and other languages, such as Oshiwambo, are used in the first four years of elementary school. Examinations are required in both Afrikaans and English. Xuma knows that Afrikaans, the first language of the majority of white Namibians, is the language that blacks must know if they hope to have any chance to gain one of the few good jobs available to them.

Like virtually all black Namibians, Xuma looks forward to the day that South African domination of his country ends. The South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), the popular movement to drive South Africa out of Namibia, has developed detailed plans for independence. Under United Nations supervision, an agreement was implemented in 1989 and 1990 in which South Africa gave up its direct administration of the country, though still dominating the Namibian economy. SWAPO language policy for independent Namibia declares that English, not Afrikaans, will be the official national language (Kennedy 1989). Therefore Xuma wants to speak, read, and write English so he can work for the new government. So with his father's encouragement, he studies both Afrikaans and English, preparing simultaneously to use Afrikaans to work in an economy dominated by the apartheid state of South Africa, and English for an independent Namibia.

from "Planning language,  
Planning inequality"

## Students' writing in ELL103S (1992)

- A.** Well, if we look at the speech given by de Klerk and Viljoen, their major concern is that Afrikaans played a very important role in the development of S. Africa at an international level, therefore Afrikaans should still play its role to help SA to prosper. What I have noticed with their speech is that they only deliver all the advantages of their language, and ignore the bad things about it. Afrikaans was not designed to uplift S. Africans but to oppress them. I don't say that Afrikaans should be abolished but I do not see any good about it. What I believe in is that all languages in SA should receive full recognition and we must forget about the past.
- B.** If we take a look at the language policies of other countries, especially in Africa, we find that they have more or less undergone the same process as South Africa is right now. For instance, Tanzania opted to take the dominant language as an official one, that is Swahili. Other countries, notably Namibia, ruled out the dominant language, Afrikaans, for official language, for political and emotional reasons. To them, Afrikaans is the language of the colonial state, South Africa.
- C.** This essay attempts to look critically at power relationships. It will do so concentrating on an extract from "Fools" by Ndebele. In it we are shown three people in the classroom, each person of different social status.
- D.** Power relationships are indicated through the language of this extract. We started to realise this when the principal entered the class and found Zani teaching. The principal is quoted saying "I am not aware of having hired a new teacher." This statement reveals to us as audience that the principal alone is the person with the right to hire teachers...
- position these extracts on the personal - impersonal strip - make notes.
  - compare with others' decisions
  - how would you position your OWN writing in different contexts?
    - courses
    - lectures
    - essay topics

## APPENDIX B: Academic Writing Sample

University of Cape Town



## ACADEMIC DISCOURSE SAMPLE :

### Background to the term

The idea of 'community' and its practical applications in South Africa are part of a larger concern with the term, which has a considerable and complex history. Much of the history of Western political theory and practice in the last three to four hundred years can be seen as the search for a definition of community that would underpin the structures of the state. More recently, the history of anthropology and sociology shows the same concern, the same search for 'communities' and the structures which create and sustain them (see, for instance, Nisbet, 1967: 47; Bell and Newby, 1971; Guyer, 1981; Cohen, 1985).

The contemporary sense of political community derives primarily from the medieval Christian religious communities, which owe their existence to St Augustine's notion of religious communion and fellowship, expressed in the 'Rule' of these orders. The religious community was held to represent in social form the communion of spirit celebrated in the Mass and Eucharist (see Bloch, 1961: 113-117). Although the Christian ideology of religious communities stresses the voluntary commitment of individuals to the community, none of the medieval religious communities could have survived the intense and protracted warfare of the period without the guarantee of security provided by the patronage of powerful nobles and kings. In return, the European religious communities served as secure repositories of

Thornton R + Rasmphela M  
"Aquest for Community" (1988)

## APPENDIX C :

ELL103 S ESSAYS

(Tsidi + Andile)

University of Cape Town

# ① TSIDI - ELLIO3 S ESSAY

English is used as a medium of instruction <sup>in</sup> U.C.T. People from different language groups meet and there is a need <sup>in order</sup> to speak one common language <sup>to</sup> have a successful communication. I found it to be more convenient in a sense that through it we are able to communicate or add our opinions to <sup>reach</sup> <sup>each</sup> and every person's understanding. C - big

<sup>a.d.(req)</sup> (Furthermore,) I discovered that students <sup>coming</sup> from DET are at a disadvantage because initially they spoke their mother tongue's. They did English as a <sup>2nd</sup> second language at school. I, personally never had great difficulties in coping with the environment in UET. Those coming from Multinationals never had a problem because they are used to the environment. <sup>req.</sup> C - DET + det.

<sup>a.d.(req)</sup> (In addition to this,) I realised that around campus people feel that they are compelled to speak English because <sup>the</sup> Majority speaks English. You'll <sup>find</sup> find that you're all Tswana speaking but due to the environmental influence, you end up speaking English. I therefore conclude by saying that people tend to forget their native languages <sup>C - losses</sup> due to the pressures they get here. It is necessary to have a uniform language whereby every individual is able to express him/herself.

2.

A language is needed for communication among people with different mother tongues. That language should serve the interest of all. English is seen as a language for liberation. (Tollefson, 1991 p 4). Through it a person will achieve goodies in future.

According to Tollefson, access to English influences educational opportunities. This is not in favour of the majority because they don't have the knowledge of English. For instance, in Namibia the SWAPO policy states that those who speak English will be able to have significant advantages in education and employment (Tollefson, 1991 p 5).

Tollefson argues that the SWAPO policy will affect the educational and employment options for the entire population of Namibia. Since Namibia is heading for independence, English will be the dominant language. Xuma is already speaking English and thus he will have great opportunities in receiving higher education and having a career in public service. English will remain a barrier for Tolo and Sam because they never had a chance to attend school so that they can learn English. Therefore they will be underprivileged.

In a nut shell, English is used to communicate in traditional multilingual markets and the modern world economic system. (Tollefson, 1991 p 6). It enables one to obtain a job and to participate in decision making systems that use English or in.

3

too? very?  
or

The main difference between these two texts is that A is too personal and B is impersonal. The reason is because A is a personal or biographical account/experiences. It is written according to what has been observed and experienced <sup>by the writer + others</sup>. The writer often uses personal pronoun I to show that he/she <sup>also</sup> accounts on his/her opinions. The writer ~~was~~ is involved in the process of speaking English. He/she often includes him/herself when stating the experiences. That is clearly shown by "we found" in the text. B is impersonal in a sense that a writer is stating somebody else's ideas or opinions. His/her personal <sup>experiences</sup> accounts are not included. The writer often used referencing to show that this is not his/her idea e.g. (Tollefson, 1991, p. 5). Statements or phrases like "according to Tollefson", "Tollefson argues that", show that the writer is stating another person's account. The language in A is too simple, explicit and straight to the point. In B language is much more difficult. It takes time to grasp the main issues stated. The tense used in A is <sup>Past</sup> tense e.g. I discovered, I realised, etc. Present tense is also used to emphasise the subject e.g. I found it. Text B uses present tense e.g. Tollefson argues that, etc.

62. In is a detailed and careful analysis of the two texts. The language in both texts are clear and simple.

## ② ANDILE : ELL1035 ESSAY.

My personal account of my experience of English language at U.C.T is that experience which the most African students have experienced. Especially those who come from the same educational background I come from. We share the same kind of experience which creates a gap between us and the other students who come from better and excellent educational background.

My educational background is that of extremely inferior education as compared to the whites students' education. It has put me to great disadvantage academically while the white students were at great advantage of being successful. For example when it comes to writing essays my marks are below par from my ability. This is because at U.C.T the English is the medium of instructions and unfortunately for me it is my second language. If I was using my own language I myself I would get high marks like what the whites whose English is their mother tongue or first language.

On discussions usually I find it difficult sometime to take part as I have to do my slow interpretation of what the topic is about. At the same time it is embarrassing for me to sound bubbly while speaking while I struggle to bring forward my point. Taking into consideration the fact that my success depends on my performance and communication, I become ~~to under~~

to understand the kind of struggle I have to go through.

During lectures what I observe is that the English Speakers are the ones who always speak and ask questions while there are extremely few English second language speakers who participate. That also show to me the kind of advantage they have and the power over those who are like myself who are always on the second position. Sometimes this power is demonstrated on conversations where they begin to speak for me by saying what I am struggling to say. That on its own make one feel less intellectual sometimes.

As I understand that language bring comfort when you are fluent and free to communicate with it. It is easy then to feel at home instead of alienation and isolation.

Yes. You have described your experience very effectively. I'd like to photocopy it to use (with out mentioning your name) in a staff-training workshop. Would that be ok?   
 Many staff members are probably not fully aware of what the experience of students are.

B. Tollepson argues that language is one of the criteria for determining which people will complete different levels of education, particularly English which had to be learnt and acquired by the millions of people for getting education and access to government service and employment. Those people who cannot attend school become unable to learn English. He also argues that because these people had to learn a new language like English, there

are effects which go with it which are ~~of~~  
 ✓ creating social and economical divisions, that  
 is, having people who are educated with good  
 opportunities and access to high paying jobs while  
 those who do not know English remain at low  
 status with no access to such opportunities. ✓

Also the government policy on language has a great  
 impact like in the case of Namibia where  
 Tollefson argues that English is to become the  
 dominant language, the people who can speak  
 English have the opportunity of getting  
 higher education and careers in public  
 ✓ service. While those who do not know or  
 know very little of English like many black  
 children who do not have a chance of  
 going to school will suffer because English  
 will become a barrier to education. ✓ This  
 then means that for these children ~~for them~~  
 it will be difficult to get education  
 without knowing English and will also  
 affect their future and opportunities for employment. ✓

He also argues that people who are unable  
 to acquire language skills they need, especially  
 English are not able to succeed in school. This  
 affects the education as far as success is  
 concerned.

You have got the main argument across clearly.  
 One of the points made in the document is that  
 as with the English teaching industry and the reasons  
 why, in spite of all the programmes, many people do not  
 learn the English they need.  
 Both texts mention the way in which these



### Section c

In the first text there is a great deal of use of personal pronouns like "I" which make the text to appear more personal. While the second text is impersonal as a result of the fact that the writer distanced <sup>himself</sup> from it by not using personal pronouns or showing his own perspective.

In the first one the writer points out his own perspective when he mentions that "As I understand that the language bring comfort when you are fluent and free to communicate with it." Unlike the first one the writer show distancing of himself by the frequent use of referencing like "Tollepson argues ...., and use of "He" referring to Tollepson. Again the referencing used by the second text show 'truths' established by the others to in his argument.

Both <sup>the two</sup> texts have different structures, the first one has a general statement which builds up to a particular statement while the second one have the particular statement which builds up to a general statement. Also the second one make use of modals like will which do not appear in the first one. <sup>What is the significance of the presence of modals in these texts?</sup>

again the choice of words in the two text differs like in the second text where phrases like

"government policy", "social and economical division", the use of these words shows that <sup>in</sup> the second text the writer made some research work and the writing becomes academic unlike the first text which uses simple language or experience.

In their arguments both texts use different types of evidence. In the first one the writer uses his own experience as a type of evidence to back up his argument. The second one shows the research done by the writer as evidence. Both texts use the present tense although it differs. The first one refers to the specific point in time like his present experience which may change as time goes and the second one is a timeless present tense. ✓

This version is along the lines that we wanted.

In it you make some good observations, but you don't organize them to their best advantage. Look at how you have grouped points in paragraphs. Can you see that some points are repeated in different paragraphs while other paragraphs have more than one main point per paragraph. As a basic rule, try to keep to one main idea per paragraph.

(INS) Look at the section on subject verbs concord in Murray & Johansen. p. 10.

## APPENDIX D:

### Student Profiles

University of Cape Town

## APPENDIX D

### PROFILES OF 13 STUDENTS INTERVIEWED

These profiles are presented in the order in which the interviews took place. In general, I have not repeated what is already represented in the main body of this text.

#### 1) Faith 2 September

Attended convent in Johannesburg from 'baby class to matric'. Mother died when she was three, raised by her father: "He's a friend, everything. I don't feel the absence of my mother". Goal to become a lawyer ever since she had heard Judge Bizos speak. Transition to UCT : "I had the feeling I don't belong here".. Identified libraries and computers as intimidating, but still very positive about UCT's "standards and reputation." Pointed out the rubric about non-racism, non-sexism on the UCT letterhead, saying that it is "not true". On referencing: "It's fine.) wouldn't like other people to take my ideas. You get to know other people." Enjoyed Political Studies which gave her the opportunity to "voice out" her feelings. Read political books. Better at writing than at talking, enjoying the 'argument words'.

#### Mpho 2 September

Early in interview, he said, "One thing about myself, I'm too delicate". Spoke of vulnerability which "undermined my manhood". No close relationships. Described transitions between schools and caregivers as very difficult. Language: "It's just a confusion, northern Sotho, Tswana". Told in great detail how he had been humiliated at matric prizegiving and not been given a prize. Prompted him to study hard. "Referencing is important for the person who's marking but not for me". Identified coherence as a real difficulty with his writing. Spoke of the need to "hide facts" in the Social Sciences.

#### 3) Nathan 9 September

Born Victoria West. 31 years old. Father died when he was 2. Matric through correspondence college. Worked as petrol attendant. Immense difficulties with studying against a background of demands from family, particularly mother's illness. Much of the interview focussed on these "setbacks". Said he wants to "have a kid". Missed assignments because of deaths in family. Second-year student whose experience shows in his analysis of the learning environment.

#### 4) Carol 13 September

19 years old, lives at home having lived in Athlone, Cape Town all her life. Acceptance at UCT unexpected. "I'm quite a loner here". Taught herself to use the library using a guidebook. Spends much time there. Struggling with French Intensive having started enthusiastically, with studying French a "fantasy from childhood". Very positive about her adaptation to UCT and study methods, unlike others who are "plain lazy". Says "I've become more mature". Others "cling to the past".

5) Bonpani 15 September

Attended St Johns in Umtata ("It's a good school"). Both parents teachers. Lives with mother. Foregrounds that he cannot spell. "It's destroying me - the need for precision". Thinks it might be a psychological problem. He sees the CLA focus of our course as being about accuracy. Imagines himself as an "investigator". Interest in politics (particularly democracy) since coming to UCT. Wants to be a lawyer, but struggles with argument. Humiliated by being out-argued on the topic 'What is a revolutionary?'. Does this mean he will not be a good lawyer? Embarrassed by poor results initially ("In the danger zone"). Cannot really express himself in academic writing. Told not to use words like 'tyrannical' and 'atrocious' when writing about capitalism.

6) Andile 17 September

Born Dordrecht in NE Cape, moved between Ciskei and Nyanga East. Early on, says that he has "energy of doing anything" but is careless. "I attach myself very closely". Spoke at length about parent's separation and its affect on him eg dilemmas about how to name himself, after father or mother. Father very important - died (stabbed) in Kingwilliamstown in 1989. Father taught him politics and love of reading. Very time conscious. Avoids partying "because of the society in which I grew up" but cannot isolate himself. Committed to being an advocate.

7) Duzi 23 September

A Zimbabwean student, wanted to to study Law at the University of Zimbabwe, unable to because of cut in intake at UZ. UCT his second choice. Lived with other Zimbabwean students in residence. Spoke Sindebele most of the time.

A levels had been good training for UCT. Struggled with "local knowledge" particularly in Political Studies, eg he did not know what the acronym COSATU stood for. He seemed to be marking time at UCT, waiting to get back to Zimbabwe. Did not engage with my questions about South Africa, comparisons with Zimbabwe or any personal issues.

8. David 24 September

27 years old. Brought up by grandfather. Only recently 'met' his mother. Failed matric. Worked with building firm, then returned to write matric at St Francis Adult Centre. He told some remarkable stories about his teachers in primary school. (One teacher forced children to find live fish, frogs etc for Science practicals). Wanted to come to UCT because he had once shared a house with UCT graduates who were "incredible people". Valued opportunities to "take sides" in certain courses eg Introduction to Africa, but thought it important to "be analytical and personal at the same time".

9. Robert 27 September

[Complete interview in Appendix E]. Sharp transitions from farm school to city. Concealed his farm background from others. Found groupwork difficult. Problems with relationships. He has become very analytical, hates mixing ideas, works too hard ("self abuse" and "I'm actually like an old man"). Struggling with identity since being at UCT.

#### 10.Tumelo 29 September

Grew up in Sharpeville and Sebokeng. Worked as teacher, hotel waiter and in a bicycle factory. Returned to school later. Chose UCT because of its well-known choir, and to get away from home "interruptions" after his father died. Father a strong role model. Says "I always wanted to identify myself as an African". Stood for Student Representative Council elections (unsuccessfully). Struggles to focus on work ("It's within me that I talk a lot... talking and writing go hand in glove").

#### 11.Peter 1 October

Zimbabwean student. Both parents teachers. Want him to be "more than" a teacher. Came to UCT because he is a "traveller". Also says people "toy-toy less" at UCT. Has had a novel published in Sindebele and is working on the translation. Little political involvement at UCT but very aware of SA issues, but not the details. Unable to really assess progress until exams which are the "real battleground". Enjoyed Medical Anthropology. Gave me a mini-lecture on how traditional healers are misunderstood.

#### 12.Tsidi 4 October

Starts by saying "If you want me to praise myself, I will". Moved between schools in Pretoria and Mmabatho. Did not expect immature behaviour she found at UCT. No academic difficulties but problems with "how we relate" in residence - language and gender. But stressed that she had lots of friends - "ladies, guys...". Finds English easy because she has a positive attitude. Attributes this to having lived with her sister who is doing a Masters in Social Work, whereas "people in the locations have this negative attitude...if you speak English, they say 'Just have a look at her'..."

#### 13.Mkhululi 4 October

Moved from Grahamstown to Guguletu, Cape Town, in 1991. Foregrounds his many involvements early on - politics, karate and church. Involvement in Black Consciousness politics against the political pattern in the area. Learnt English from political work (from "AZAPO group of intellectuals"). Compared political experiences in Grahamstown and Guguletu in some detail. Struggling with language ("In tuts I keep quiet...my verbs are not in place"). Enjoying the freedom from family, but not restrictions requiring focus on academic work.

## APPENDIX E:

### Transcript of Interview with Robert.

University of Cape Town

## **TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW**

**ROBERT** - 27 SEPTEMBER 1993

Where have you been - have you been to another class?

Ja, from Latin class.

Straight from Latin.

Ja, like started in ..... ..

What I've done - I just always start by asking students to tell me a bit about themselves, so just a little biographical stuff.

Like where I'm from? Where I attend school?

Ja.

Where you are from, schooling, family, age, just so that I have a little picture of the person.

Okay.

Well, I'm the first born of my parents. I was born in Welkom in the Free State - a township next to Welkom. But I attended my primary school at a farm.

How come?

No, like you see, at first my parents were staying at a farm. We were living on a farm, basically, and that's why I attended from sub A until Std 5 - primary school - in the farm.

Ja.

And then I moved to the township from Std 6 - 10. But I was staying with relatives. And my parents came while I was doing Std 9 and they moved from the farm. So, that's my primary from Sub B to Std 5 in the farm, and then Std 6 - 10 in the township. But basically I attended only two schools. One primary school. I never went to these you know.

Unusual experience.

Ja, and then I just had one secondary school - from Std 6 to Std 10. After passing Std 10 I couldn't make it to varsity. Like I didn't have finance to pay my fees, so basically I passed my matric well. But I couldn't get scholarship, so I spent a year 1992 - and then in 1993 I came here.

Did you work?



Jo, I was finding some part-time employment round about August, but it doesn't pay that much. But it's better than nothing.

So you had that year to orient yourself and think?

Ja, basically what I was doing I was just writing letters requesting you know, writing bursary applications - it was devastating. 'Cause you get regrets and more especially I wasn't doing science courses, mostly they want Science courses so I wanted to do law. And there is no law scholarship. So I had to see .....about Public Administration, that's why I'm doing BA - majoring in Public Administration.

Well, I'll come to that just now but tell me a little bit more about your early experiences - tell me about the farm school - that's unusual, it's interesting - it's a different thing to have done.

Okay. Well the farm school is likely most just two classrooms. In one class room you find Sub A, Sub B and Std 1. They are grouped in the same class - you see like sometimes the Sub B, they moved out and sit under a tree and you work there. Then after some time the teachers gives you some work to do and then she went inside to proceed with the other classes, you see, like Std 1 and 2 mostly we did the same stuff. Different a bit but primarily it was the same thing.

So you would like repeat?

Ja, ja. Some work that you didn't finish in Std 1 - you continue.

I don't know how those teachers cope - it must be so hard to manage, you know.

Ja, no the thing is it's a very small group of people. I mean the farm school has less than 100 pupils. It's not much. That is how they manage - it's not like the township you see like the pupils in one school are about 1200. In a classroom you have say maybe 40 - 20 is Std 1 and 2 and then other it's maybe 10/4. See 11 for Sub A then 8 for Sub B, you see. It's not that difficult. But I think that something that is more a problem for the pupils because they do not get exposed to many things - you see like just do the same things every day. Sub A - for two years we do the same things. If you are in Sub B you use the chalk. The differences when you come to Sub B you start using your pencil - that's the only difference, but you doing the same things, you know.

The difference is the tool?

Ja, and then the introduction of foreign languages - say Afrikaans or English. Like Sub A there is no foreign language. You use your home language. Then Sub B we start using Afrikaans, like they say John/Jan skop die bal. Die bal is deur Jan geskop. You know, just that.

Passive voice.

Ia, and then in Std 1, that's what we do. Die baba het geval.

You know what I mean?

Is jou Afrikaans vlot?

Ja, ek kan jou nie se nie, maar as iemand praat, dan kan ek verstaan wat by se, en ek kan terug praat. It's much easier for me, I can communicate in Afrikaans. It's not a problem.

And your home language is it Setswana?

No, Home language is South Sotho. But I'm bad in African Languages. I mean Tswana is almost the same with my Language, I understand it too, but the difference is Xhosa and Zulu. I understand if you say something in Xhosa, but I can't say back.

You can't respond.

!a, maybe if you talk to me in Xhosa, I understand what you are saying and I can answer you in maybe English or my home language. But then the difference between the farm school and - I mean farm schools are not the same as Township schools. Even the Primary schools. You come to Secondary school from a farm school in the Township, it is more like coming to University of Cape Town from disadvantaged schools, you see!

Do you see it as a disadvantage? The farm schooling?

!a, ja.

Because of that lack of exposure?

Ja, like you are all taught by one teacher and she gives you what she wants - you possess you know her thinking way. She channels you and if she thinks you have to do this thing this way, a child becomes what he learns. So if you learn something from a young age, obviously I will grow up with that. So you see that sort of stereotype - you only know this type of thing.

Do you think it's quite a deep thing that - it's the way you think and ..

It's a very strong influence in your thinking way. I mean you think like that person. But if you are taught by different teachers, you have a choice which one - primarily there might be one which thinks like you, and you like this teacher, you like the way she talks, the way she do things - but if there is only one teacher, there is no choice. You only have to follow what she says because you know nothing. And you only know that person for as long as you can remember your school days. But when you come to the Townships and the Secondary School, it was different. To start with, it was fearful like to see such a large number of pupils.

You loose that security.

Ja, you feel insecure, then you feel very small.      Like you know the attitude of the Township people to the farm people?

Like snobbery?

Ja if you are from the farm they think you are somehow backward. You see, it makes you feel inferior and actually I did hide that I am from the farm. I was lying, but then I was clever enough to know I am lying about something that I know! I used to like my Grandparents they lived in the next Town, so I would say no, I am from Ventersburg, you see.

And you had that knowledge if anyone asked you?

Actually I was aggressive because they wouldn't ask me much so -why care, what do you want. You don't have to ask me questions about my background - just say what you want. You see, like being aggressive, I was trying to hide that I was from the farm, but after some time I was on top of it - like I was basically known by anyone at school and I was an SRC member from Std 7 to Std 10. Representing - you know like there is a representative for each class, so I was re-elected each year you see, so it was cool.

Something worked for you there?

Ja, like I was from the farm, they didn't have that downward look on me. But the problem was coping you know - coping with friends - so like I said before, I'm not used to group work now.

When I first met you that's what you said about yourself. So in my mind, that's there.

Ja you see the problem is, like I said before in my background, I was a very withdrawn person. Say I felt inferior - most probably my family life is not well-off - like we have problems initially, like my Dad drinks a lot and fights my mother, you know sometimes they fight and my mom had to go home and she takes us with her and then after say maybe three months, he comes back and collects us you see, and that's frustrating. So you don't have that self pride, like even if I try to hold my head high, you know that my father is fighting - he's always fighting, so when I am around other kids, you know, they would say Your father was beating your mom yesterday and he was standing outside shouting" - you see it makes you feel bad.

Whatever you do can't change that.

Ja, so obviously whatever you do, you think what you are doing. Whatever you do you make sure you don't offend anybody. Because they'll come back to you about your family affair, you see and then I had an accident - I was about 8 years and I had a farm accident - I lost my left toes - like you see the machine that used to clean the maize in the fields - ja, we used to play there so one day I was there with other four guys but they were older than me, so you see like there is something which collects the meal, it's in there - after some time it must be moved from this machine to be transported, but then there is a blade down there, so at the time I tried to get off the machine, they couldn't allow me to get off, these other guys - they were bigger than me, so they pushed me down.

And you fell into the blade?

Ja, but I was lucky because I could grab this upper part through -the blade could only touch my left foot, but it cut the bone so badly that it couldn't be repaired, so they had to cut it off. So like when I walk I limp somehow. So I know I'm a cripple, and when I'm around other kids when I you see I said I was 8 years, so round about 10 or 9, still Primary School, I felt like they come to me about it - "You don't have toes" you know.

Ja, you're different.

Ja, you're different you see. It was something which affected me psychologically, so I couldn't be open to anybody so I spent most of my time isolated you see. So it was tough to be involved with other people. That is why I say group work is difficult for me, more especially with the opposite sex - maybe girls you see. It's much better with boys now. But with girls I think they just look at me and say "he doesn't have this, he's poor, he doesn't have - you see, it makes you feel very small like I can't go and propose to a girl I want her to be my girlfriend, whatever, it takes time like I'm so scared. Psychologically I don't know - it's a problem.

Robert, I also see a lot of confidence in you.

Well, its developing - like somehow I have to stand and say well, what did they do for me - it's my life, so you want me or you don't. That's me - accept me as I am. Because even if I don't like being this way, I am like this, so it's fact that I have to face and I have to change this life. Even if maybe I'm poor, well, nobody is going to change it - I have to work on it, you see what I mean.

Ja.

And the problems my mom and my dad used to have, they don't have them anymore, since we are older now. And moreover, it wasn't my problem, it wasn't me fighting. It was them fighting. You can't come to me with their problems. That's unreasonable. So now I just know this is my life, and well, I know what I want - you accept me as I am or not. There are even some guy who have more accident like me - some their legs were cut at the waist, so they can't even walk and use the wheelchairs, but I can run, I can play soccer, I can play everything.

Really?

Ja, I can run. Some people don't even know I had such an accident. You see, unless I tell you. It doesn't worry me anymore. But I think mostly it's part of growing up, you see like, I'm okay, things like this doesn't matter. I mean, people are different. If you understand what I tell you, it touches you somehow. Thinking of my position and this kind of life, but others doesn't so you can't judge them for someone saying this to you. Moreover I can't allow anybody to determine my life. That's why I have to be confident and face up to challenges. Sometimes in class I used to sit there and say nothing, even if I know this is not like this - but now I can't hold anything back - I just say 'no no'. Even the teachers - like I was doing history at school, and I used to read a lot and you see sometimes a teacher makes a mistake or maybe she doesn't have that information - much information about it. You see teachers, sometimes they take a chance.

I know that as well.

So, you try and say something. I mean we assume that he knows everything, so we have to believe in what he say, and he is confident about everything that he says, so sometimes I just say, 'no, I disagree with you at this point because I have read that it was like this' - then we argue about it and we go to the book and I prove to him that here it is, you see, so I knew this is the way that I have to be.

And you learned that at school?

Ja, I don't have to take anything that is given to me and like I have to be certain about it and you get the proof. Like I was reading a psychology book like it says 'out of every five things a person says, four of them is a lie' - only one is true'. So I do analyze everything, even if they have a problem with me - say somebody passes a joke, I don't take it as a joke, I think about it and ..

Think why?

Ja, ja, I went bigger, and sometimes you see I find okay, this wasn't a joke. Like say now I bought some shoes, and they say 'MM, you have money these days' - you see I think about it too -why, he is checking me all this time saying ' he doesn't have shoes, poor him. But when I get something better, he say, 'oh, now you are getting successful'. You see, I think about it. Is it a joke? Sometimes, no, I think, this is not a joke. You see but it's troublesome like I'm too curious and..

It means one is not happy with superficialities.

MMmmm.

The way you describe it now, it's like your defence is to be analytical.

I didn't used to be like that, but I am just like that. And somehow its a pain, because here I understand essays at varsity are different like at school. Like at school we are given like maybe 'A Journey by Bus'. There is nothing to criticise and nothing to analyze but so some just think about what is it like. But I would like to write about something which I have experienced. You see like if - if like a school journey, I try to narrate the journey we had, the real thing. So I have lot of things to say - we went there and we did this, so I always had good essays, but here at varsity it is different because you have to analyze. They give you this and 'analyze this critically'.

Does it suit you to do that?

Ja, at first it was a problem - but like first semester. But now I am comfortable, I'm on top of it - I even enjoy writing essays.

Like this Monday, yesterday. I had to submit two essays - 2000 each, *and* I can't believe it - I started on Saturday with the first one and I finished it on Saturday (Introduction to African Politics)and on Sunday I was doing Political Studies Essay analyzing the transition

to democracy ..... compared to South Africa. I started that on Sunday morning after breakfast, and Sunday when I went to bed, I was finished with it.

Fantastic.

So, I like - I don't find it that difficult. Even this poetry we had to analyze a poem - and when it comes back I got about 65% so I think it's okay. Compared to others. Like somebody say 'how much did you get' I say '65' - 'oh well, I got 52'. And the other thing, I am surprised like, I don't sit down and draft and write 8 pages of an essay and translate it. I just take books from the library and I read, okay, they say this about this, and then I forget it. So, maybe I like working under pressure. When I have a day or two to submit, then I sit down and I just go straight. I write first page and second like I ask people the pages and I'm finished with it. I do not rewrite first and -well, I just don't do that. Maybe I'm lazy!

Well also there is confidence about doing that. Maybe if you went back and did this again, it would sharpen it, you know.

You see like the other problem is, I like thinking. I think a lot, that's the problem with me, like sometimes I would say 'I'm more like this mark' You know I'm like a diplomat, I don't know why I like to say that but if I write eight essays, next time I write it and never translate this - I'm going to change the whole thing. Like last semester, I wasn't as confident as I am now with my essay writings, so we had an essay on Political Studies, I was writing about communism, so I did draft it out - I still have the rough work - it's about ten pages, but when I write - it's totally different from the essay that I handed in, because when I was translating other thoughts come I realised that I had other thoughts there and I was writing that instead of translating this, you see, now it's given me a lot of..

That is what drafting is about. Because what you do this first time is you put some ideas there and in doing that you can actually stand back and say 'hang on .....'. That's what makes a good writer.

No but what I do is like say maybe if I'm going to write about communism, I just write about something like this short. First paragraph I'll talk about this, second paragraph I'll talk about this ..

Like a plan?

Ja, that's the only thing I use. I mean I know I hate mixing ideas, say first paragraph I talk about that, and then the very same thing I talked about appears in maybe paragraph 4.

Ja.

No, if I talk about that, it's getting too big. It's going to be there you see - no matter how long that paragraph is going to be on the first part of the essay. So maybe my introduction can be one and a half page, introduction - I don't say maybe I talk about this and the introduction part appears in the body of the essay. No no. It's like parts, step by step. You'll understand when you read, okay this person is following something, you know.

Ia.

After a while I would say, like in the above paragraph I said so, you see like then they come together like this, that's what I learned here in the ASP last semester. Talking about coherence of - I didn't know that but I learned it here. Otherwise it's very interesting like sometimes I feel, okay, maybe at a later stage one can write a book, or a short story - one thing, I'd like to write a book about my life -my life story.

You must do it one day. Even if you don't do it for an audience - do it for yourself.

But I think so many things happened to me at an early age, like I'm about 22 years old now, but the experience that I have is like someone who is 35 years old. I mean, it's unfair.

Do you think it pushed you too fast, too quickly.

Ja I don't believe like my age allows - I am much more concerned about some things and I'm scared about other things, you know, I don't easily get involved just like that - I'm too scared, now 'what comes out of this' you see. So psychologically it is devastating because I don't enjoy my young age - I'm already like an old man. It's not good. Even if say I have a relationship -I don't trust k. I had two steady relationships, but they just went off. So I don't trust them, I'm sorry like saying that. If it's a nice girl like, okay, anyone has some criteria, she must be like this and think like that, you know, but then I say, well she is like others. All women are the same - she's going to hurt me.

Mmmmmmmmm

That's a problem. That's the way I think about them now, so .. But now I'm developing some of the negative attitude towards them but they are not bottom line. I can do something, like get educated and get my degree and maybe do honours and masters and then find a suitable job and work and have cars and beautiful house and live with my Mom. It's easy for me but -

Do you feel you are missing something if you do that?

Ja, I'm missing something but I try to convince myself it's not the bottom line, it's not important, it's not that much. That's why I say it's unfair, I live like somebody else and I'm so young you see. I have much to do in this life, but I'm already experiencing some things out of my life.

Maybe it gives you a certain advantage for this academic thing -which requires those sort of analytical skills. It might advantage you there.

It's self abuse somehow - I have plenty of time for my books because I don't go out - movies or girls, whatever. I just sit with friends - we talk and talk and thereafter I go to my room or I come to library, but then the problem is, you see somebody like in the res - they go out girlfriends maybe they went out -you feel like you could have one and you could also be going out. You know, but I hate to be turned down - to be disappointed by someone. Every time somebody leaves me, it's like she is taking a part of me with her. And it just

can't come back, so actually I don't think I have a heart with me now. It's all gone. It's finished. (laughs...)

No, you have, please. Maybe there are ways of being friends without feeling that you have to go..

Just be a friend, not be committed?

Ja. ja.

It's not easy, I mean we -

Sort of experiment with friendships. Instead of lovers and that terrible fear of being hurt.

But there's a problem with this - you know like the African people are not like the whites. Like the whites like I would say just come together - they are so integrated, careful there - that's your perception, but we, if maybe I went to the opposite sex and tried to be friendly - just friends - but we have that thing that relationship between the opposite sex -

Only means one thing?

Ja, ja. If I come like a friend they suspect there's a mystery behind - you see - there's more to it. So they sort of - talk to a lady - you trying to be friends with someone, she's positive about it, so you leave them alone or you face the challenge. That's the - I mean life at UCT for me it's okay academically, but social life, it's not like I expected.

Did you think it would be better and easier?

Ia, like I thought people at varsity level they understand. They don't judge things which doesn't matter. I mean like there are some things which happened to someone's life, which you didn't choose, and beyond control, like even that accident, it was something I couldn't do anything about. And things like poverty. I cannot do anything. I mean if my dad wasn't educated too and had no money, it wasn't my fault. But people with developing minds they do care about those things. But I thought we at varsity you know, we are now older than the others, so we don't worry ourselves with things like that but it is surprising that - well, this is a materialistic world, so material matters! You see, it doesn't matter, but also I'm enjoying academic life - if you pass, you get 60 - 75% - like in the Introduction to Africa I think I'm doing well, I'm ranging between 65 and 75 - like I found it with essays and assignments, they are good, but that shows that I understand my job and -

You know what you are doing?

That's what I like - I feel good about it.

You asked - in a whole lot of ways you have said very clearly that you feel this writing is something in which you can express yourself? But I can see that goes way back, like when you wrote at school as well - like 'My Journey by Bus' - you wouldn't just do it out there - you'd do it from here.



Ja, you see, the problem with - just taking that topic, I don't know anything about it. And it's not like here that we have reference books - you just have to think about it - and you can't think about something you don't know. See, maybe I've never been on a train, and I have to write about a Journey by Train, what am I going to say? I've never been there -

I know nothing about trains - so I thought it was stupid to write something I don't know about and like we didn't write long essays, it was about two pages or one and a half page, but if you don't know about a subject you can't write even five lines about it. Unless you are going to repeat something that is going to be monotonous for the reader. So to avoid that, I was trying to write about something that I know and therefore I'll have much to say.

You see. So you choose - they give you a heading, but then you choose whether to write about yourself, your personal experience, under the heading - it was okay. But here at varsity, I mean The Transition to Democracy is Transition to Democracy - I can't say what I like about it - okay.

You can.

Well, ja I can but to a certain extent. But then they give you some hints what is expected from you like say I had an essay about African Religion, and they say 'Discuss African Religion concerning the power of the ancestors, in healing fortunes and misfortunes - I cannot say something else - I have to be relevant to these things.

Ja.

Though I am thinking like mostly I chose that topic because I am an African so I know the African Religion.

There are two kinds of relevance, one is relevance to the topic, okay so you've got your 'Beatings fortunes and misfortunes' and the other one is relevance to your experience.

Ja

You would do both.

Ja, obviously I'll do both because everyone here has said something about our healings and you take a book in the library saying something about African Healers - basically you will find these things you know. And if you say you know this, then it's plagiarism! Because somebody has said this already, and then even if -

Did you also battle with that?

Ja, you know it's so devastating - I mean communism - what is there that has not been said about communism and you are expected to write two thousand words about communism or rather African Religion. Like I know African Religion it's so closely integrated with African culture. I even think that religion is culture itself. So like, but then some writers, African writers, say all things that I know, like they are Africans too -they have the very same experience as I do, so if I say this, it might appear as if this people is stealing somebody's writing - now he has portrayed this as his own thinking. You see that's the part which is -

That's interesting, you've made me think about something because in a way if it's not part of your experience, then it's easier to know that you have to draw on that other person's writing but when the other person is writing about your experience, it actually makes it much harder.

Then you don't have any facts.

Because then you have nothing to stand on.

Ja, I mean how can you write an essay which somebody said this, all your essays is quotations - that's not an issue, you are rewriting now, so if you don't show you are re-writing -

Re - what?

Rewriting what has already been written, and if you don't prove that you took this from a certain writer, then that is plagiarism. But then, like I said, I like analyzing, I like thinking a lot - I just sit there and think about it, okay - even if we know the very same things. But then the way we present it can be different. We experience these same things, but the way you wrote about it and way I write about it is different.

So thats also - you talked about that today in our class - that is also where the personal thing comes in, how you choose to link the points. And the words that you use to describe it - that's where you feel that person.

la

The person behind the writing.

Ja, you see like this other African writer for example, they used to say God - now we in Africa don't have God - we have Modimo -

It's bigger

Ja, superior being. So I choose not to mention God in my essay.

Did you use the word Modimo?

Ja, I said 'Modimo' in direct commas, you know. So that's Modimo. We don't know God. We know Modimo. But then when I refer to somebody, I write it straight. Ile said 'God'.

When the African people wanted something from God, they would ask the ancestors - like they used ancestors as Badima - as a link between them and God but then I didn't say they used ancestors, I said they used 'Madim' was sort of a link between the living and Badimo.

There is a difference there. You see ancestors was a link between -

It changed the meaning?

Ja, so now I didn't say the Ancestors were a link but I said the Badimo, the people could ask Badimo, then Modimo -

You see if I wrote that essay I would never use the word Modimo. Or I would talk about God or ancestors. By doing that you are placing your own very personal meaning in that word, and that with that word comes your own experience. Are you a religious person.

Well, coming to - you know like that is a very difficult question.

Yes, if you asked me I wouldn't know how to answer it either.

Ja, you see the problem is - religion - if you say I am a religious person, do you mean I am a Christian?

No. I mean it wider than that. I mean do you think about spiritual things?

Ja, like I said the African people believed in a superior being. Modimo. And Badima. Badimo means ancestors.

Oh yes, and one mediates.

We believe in talking to Madim - ancestors, and then ancestors talk to Modimo. And request something.

You do it through them - they are in the middle.

Ja, they are mediators between the people and God. But then Christianity doesn't believe in Badimo - they say no, they are dead and the dead are dead. Belong to the world of the dead.

But the African culture says they are not dead - so say I am a Christian, then basically I turn my back against my culture now. And that is where I have problems with Christianity.

No by religious I didn't mean Christian.

Okay, then I do believe in Superior Being, which is Modimo. And Badimo - sometimes I find myself praying, but like I said before, a child becomes what he learns - you know I used to pray according to the Christians - but now at the end of my prayer I say 'In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ' - but then now I have a problem. If I had to pray like that, I think I have to change the meaning and the words I choose to use. See like I can't say 'In the name of Jesus Christ' - because I think, no, Jesus was for some other people - not for Africans. I don't know, maybe that's for politics.

Politics?

Ja,

It's awareness of - it's - because as a child you would just have absorbed those languages. Sort of language of Christianity, but now one's awareness - politics, language, religion.

But if I have to be honest with you this radical change in my life came here at UCT - I mean I don't even have a year here, but I was so involved, like I read broadly, so many books I read they taught me something, and I learned like missionaries - even the films like in the Introduction to Africa we have a film every Friday - so the films that we see there, like they started from the colonialism and the missionaries. The missionaries they were so selfish according to me - like they portray them in the books. I mean they didn't care about the African culture - they just came and gave us what they want us to believe - this is the right thing and like sometimes I say, okay, I have two names - African name and English name. But how many English people have African names - why? You see you just got to -

That's a very good illustration.

So, like there's a book by Muzorewa, he said he grew up in a Christian family - they were converted by the missionaries, but then they had problem like if you say you are a Christian, you must have a Christian name. If you just have an African name, then the missionaries don't regard you as a Christian.

It's like a sign.

Ja, this ....

Now then why do you call yourself Robert? What's your African name?

My African name is Koki. I actually have a problem with being here - now that I'm here. I mean, all along I didn't have any problem with it, but now that I am and I know all these things that I know now, that I came across here at UCT, I have problems with this name here. Like I want to go back to my African name. Say forget - and get rid of Robert. In my - here at varsity, and in my documents or ID whatever, it doesn't show anymore, because I don't see a point in a Christian name because I don't think I'm a Christian. You see that is the problem. Like there are others who are Moslems - Moslems and Christians are equivalent - or rather they are opposite each other, like they are people who regard Moslem the same as Christians. You see they are actually fighting for beliefs, and there are Rastas - you know Rastas? Who believe in Jab?

Yes, I see what you mean by opposites - they are in the same frame work, sort of contending

So you see like, my point is that the Christians believe in Christ as a link between themselves and God. So why we, the African people, can't be allowed to use Badimo as a link between

As your link? Conceptually it's the same thing.

Ja, it's the same. Jesus is equivalent to Badimo, but then the missionaries they made us believe it that that is paganism - believing in Madim. It's foolishness - it's nothing like that, which is African culture. Our forefathers, they did believe in that, but then we then became against our culture - then we don't have any culture anymore. I mean I can hardly call myself an African, if I don't do the things which were done by Africans. I'm now on the

middle of this - I don't even know myself - I'm not African, I'm not European. You see. So, I want to go back to Africa - that's the problem.

It's interesting that coming to UCT makes you feel like that.

Ja, you see, it's funny because UCT, it's like a community of young people, but I disagree - if I came here, I was so optimistic about it. Thinking. 'Oh, it's going to be good' - Welkom it's a very racial town - it's dominated by the CP, so you feel like you are black when you are there. So sometimes I used to say, ah, when I was small - I said like I wish I was a white boy like they had everything good.

Yes, it came easily.

There was a white small boy on the farm, you know. He just called us and we played with him there. He choose he want to play with you, but if he don't want to, he chase you away, you see. We wanted to be with him you know, he was superior - we looked up on him and sometimes I felt - I so wished I could be as white, you know, and have all these things. And when I grew, things which you are forbidden to have, are things we like the most. Like I think I was about 15 years or so, see white girls in town. And I say, eh, I like these. See like - just like them and try to talk to them, but it was forbidden. So when I came to UCT, UCT rejects racism and that, I said, Okay, then this is a chance - I'll maybe have a white girlfriend you know, maybe - I believe they are disciplined, like maybe they are sensitive - unlike the African girls. So you see, maybe it's an assumption or personal perspective. If you are intellectual - they have relationship

(end of tape) but then they are so used to me as Rob, even if I get rid of Rob - but the people know me as Rob - it won't be easy for them to forget that I'm Rob, like since like my Std 6 I was called Rob, but at Primary I had a nickname like Pinkwaan (Pink One)

Pink? Like white? Why pink?

Well, actually my grandmother called me Pinkwaan - when I was a baby my mom say I was pink in colour, so they say Pink One - the one who is pink in colour. But I didn't like that name. So when I went to the Township I changed it, so they just called me Rob -in Std 6. So I came here, I was, like I said so optimistic about society - where there is no colour. I mean, I don't like this colour stuff. Say you are white or black. I just don't like it, it makes matters even worse. So, just wanted to me one - like the first day I came here, I had a lot of white friends, like we had a party at the res so - I was dancing with them, talking - like they all know me, but then that shows that we just know each other, but we are not friends. At the beginning like at the party, we are friends - we are all sitting there - I didn't know anybody here. So now one thing I realised now, it is much easier to talk to white strangers rather black strangers - it's fine -I mean there is no black consciousness here - it's just theory it's not in practise. Like we blacks have much problems among ourselves than we have with whites you know. Like I can talk to a white freely - see maybe I ask you something, but if I have to ask a black person something, you know like you feel small - they make you feel like you are stranded now - and you don't know, you see.

Explain that - is it like you shouldn't be asking the question?

No, it's like if you ask a question, it shows that person you are asking knows something that you don't, meaning he has something over you, you see. And the person who is going to answer you, is going to make you feel small. Like I remember one day I was in the gym, I saw another guy he is so builded, you know, he has a muscular body - it's very very nice. So I said, like I was friendly, so I said 'How long did you take to build this?' - he just look at me and say 'two weeks' and went off. Just like that. And he knows that it didn't take him two weeks, but obviously he didn't want to talk to me about it. Just didn't want to talk to me - and it's funny, he is an African, but I talk to white guys and I say 'Wow, you have a good body' - they say 'Okay, keep training, you'll be just like me' - just a matter of time, you see. And we talked about it and he tell me what kinds of things I have to eat, and how to exercise. So you see, he is white, but he is more friendly. But the black one just give you a short answer and just went away. That shows he's not interested, so it's something which is confusing. So maybe if I say I want to go back to black consciousness and say maybe show that I'm African among whites, and show you that you are different and act in a different way that's stupid, but then you see, my problem is, I have to know my I have to know who I am, where I am from - I don't turn my back against myself - turn my back against my culture - see, if I become a Christian, then I turn against myself. I can't do that, because then I'll be living like somebody wants me to be, and it's fine like those missionaries, they were preaching the good words, okay? And teaching the people - I mean nobody can deny that they uplifted the way of life in Africa, okay? But at the same time they were so cruel like I just learned in Kenya, during the Mau Mau War so I had a lot of readings about the Kenya life and the way the missionaries chase the people away from the land - you see it's surprising. The missionaries are people who are supposed to care about other people if -

Contradiction there.

Ja. If this oppression - then the missionaries should be on the side of the oppressed, trying to get rid of this oppression, but if the missionaries themselves chase people away from their land, then what is that supposed to mean? How would you react to that? You can't believe what they say - I mean even if they preach the good words and the gospel, you can't take it - if they say ugly things about you and your religion, like 'you can't believe in someone who is dead' and 'didn't you bury him in the soil and put soil over him - he is dead - he is not alive, you can't believe in'. You see, we grew up believing in that - our forefathers believed that - they didn't believe that if someone dies, he wasn't put in a coffin, or he wasn't put in the grave -you know like in the flat position. But he was put there in the sitting position and given seed and everything -

As if he were alive?

Ja, and they would say they give him seed so he can plant food for him and prepare the land where he is going for the one he leaves behind, because they are going to come later, you see. So the missionaries say no, there is nothing like that. You see, obviously -

Contradictory?

la, we have to turn against ourselves for the people who oppress us and who look at us as stupid. You see it's that part that J have a problem with, but not to say - not every white is a Christian and not every - plenty of the whites here today were not there, so they don't know anything about it, and like the struggle for democracy against apartheid, there were many whites against that. Like the feeling that we show yesterday apartheid, the feeling that we show, see apartheid in South Africa. Like there were white people working by this white government for rejecting apartheid you know, so you can't say, I want it for this whites but I'm black and then be rude against you, that's not the point. The point is to know myself, know my culture, you know, and just be myself. We can live together, but I know who J am, J know where J am from.

J think it's something everyone is going to have to adjust to as - well we talk about a transition, but everyone is going to have to - there aren't clear patterns to fall back on. Maybe you are right, and it's a question of knowing yourself.

And you respect my culture and my traditions, I respect yours, but we live together.

Ja.

J do allow you to perform rituals, whatever you do, and you don't come and stop me if I do things that I'm supposed to do for my forefathers, you know. That's cool. J mean you don't judge me for my culture, you judge me as a person. I mean you can have problems with a white person, or dislike him or whatever, you know be in conflict with him, so that's what I want. So J have problems with you, not because of your colour - because you are a person. I mean people don't live happily every day. We have differences here and there, but not colour to be the problem - that's something which I don't like, but what can we do about it? Nothing.

We'll just have to work these things out, you know.

Mmmmm

## APPENDIX F:

History 2 essay - Tumelo

University of Cape Town



COURSE: HIS 2053

TUTOR:

STUDENT:

DUE DATE: 01-10-'93

DATE SUBMITTED: 01-10-'93

ESSAY TITLE:

ANALYSE THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE  
SHARPEVILLE CRISIS OF THE EARLY-1960'S. DISCUSS  
WITH BROAD REFERENCE TO BOTH LOCAL CONDITIONS  
AND SOUTH AFRICA'S WORLD POSITION.

When analysing the causes and results of the Sharpeville shooting, it is of vital importance for one to understand the building up of events earlier on and see through the microscopic eye how these events escalate and build up into this boiling pot (Sharpeville Shootings). These events are entailed in the manifestation of events as perpetrated by leaders of ANC, PAC and other political organisation. The program of action that this organisation followed. Then after outlining the program of action of these organisation, we then take a tour and explore the Government's counter attack on these organisations. Which these counter attacks by the Government hamper the economic growth of the country due to international sanctions. In conclusion how for example organisation such as the PAC formed its arm force Poqo and ANC unknowns we. siwe.

It is highly important to first focus our attention to the current political, economic and sociological factors prevailing before Sharpeville, with little biography of people of South Africa. Politically people of South Africa especially blacks, were faced with highly unjust, harsh and repressive laws. To name but few, laws like the Land Act of 1913, the influx control and group areas acts. All these laws were very suppressive to the eyes of the people of South Africa,

especially Africans (Black South Africans). These laws were forced into the throats of Africans by whites without consulting them, as Sobukwe and Mandela said in their defence in Court. Among these laws there was one law which was notorious, in that it caused many people to lose their lives, the pass laws. Under these pass laws Africans were forced to carry this pass book with them where ever they go, for them to seek for employment passes were of importance. It is as a result of these pass laws that the Defiance Campaign of 1952 was born.

This defiance campaign came into being with the joined planning of Indian Congress, the African National Congress and other organisations. Their main objective was to organise a massive strike that would take form of protest against the racial laws passed by the South African Government of which the National Party was the ruling leader or in governance. These organisations especially targetted pass laws as already said, the Stock limitations, the Separate Representation of Voters' act, Group areas acts and the Suppression of Communism Act.<sup>2</sup>

1. POGRUND, SOBUKWE AND APARTHEID, p 160.
2. MELI, SOUTH AFRICA BEYOND TO US, p 120.

With the inclusion of Coloureds, Indians and Whites in this so called All African Organisation certain members of the ANC broke away, saying that the ANC was selling the suppression of the African people with the slave market. Thus they formed their own political organisation which will address the right of the Africans who were oppressed. This organisation then became to be known as the Pan Africanist Congress with Robert Sobukwe as the leader.<sup>3</sup>

Both the PAC and ANC had one common enemy, that was the racist South African regime. Thus in December 1959 both the PAC and the ANC announced their plans for a campaign against pass laws.<sup>4</sup> A special attention was to be devoted in mobilising women Nation wide in prayer meetings. Workers were to take the most leading role in their kind of protest.

In formulating their program of action, the ANC between the years 1957 and 1960 prepared plans for a Nation wide campaign of resistance against the racist regime. This resistance was to take a

3. MEH, SOUTH AFRICA BELONGS TO US, p 140.

4. LODGE, BLACK POLITICS IN SA SINCE 1945, p 201.

(4)

form of work stoppage, burning of Passes and others. These masses of the oppressed people were successfully mobilized for the 31st March 1960, for Anti pass demonstrations and nation wide work stoppage. However 10 days before the Campaign on the 21 March 1960 the PTA issued a call to the people to go and stand in protest outside police stations.<sup>5</sup> With Sobukwe and his supporters leading a march to Orlando Police station.

Sobukwe's plan was for everybody to present themselves for arrest, so as to fill up the Government jails with protesters, protesting for pass laws to be scrapped. While Sobukwe and his followers were at Orlando police station, other people were presenting themselves to the police for arrest. People in places like the Vaal, where thousands of people gathered in protest against these pass laws. It's reported that about 10,000 people demonstrated in Evaton. Just about 18 km from Evaton another group of people also gathered and march to the local police station. People from Brislington and Bophelong gathered and marched to Vanderbijlpark at Steelworks town police station. About 4,000 people took part in this protest.<sup>6</sup>

5. MERI, SOUTH AFRICA BELONGS TO US, p/40.

6. POGRUND, Sobukwe AND APARTHEID, p/32.

In the very same area the Vaal, at a place called Sharpeville, named after the major John Sharp, people also went to the local police station. About 5000 to 7000 demonstrators in Sharpeville went to the local police station in Sharpeville with no passes. We are

→ traditionally told that people were just standing next to the police station. Among this people were women, children, youth and men. These people as they waited for the answer from the police station were astonished to see military cars moving in.

It is said that these people were so relaxed when this policemen and army cars came to Sharpeville.

What these people heard later after the reinforcement, was gun shoots. People were running in all directions, mothers and children crying alike. The main street known as Seiso was full of people running for their lives while others were falling down as gun shoots were heard. It is believed that about 69 people died while hundreds were injured. The injured people did <sup>it</sup> go to the local clinic or ~~the~~ evening hospital for their feared arrest at hospital.

The news came to Sobukwe at Orlando station through a journalist friend. <sup>b.</sup> Sobukwe is saved to b. POGREUND, Sobukwe and Apartheid, p 133

being disturbed by the news. He was arrested with other leaders. While Sharpeville people were experiencing hardship, people in Cape Town Township of Langa were also experiencing the same. These people had earlier march to Cape Town and returned home. Later there were raids in their homes. Many people were arrested as a result. A young UCT student Kgosana was later arrested. Kgosana was instrumental in organizing Langa, east and west Nyanga people. Later two women taking a baby to hospital were shot at and the baby killed.

Since the PAC had started earlier with the anti pass campaign, the ANC took over from the PAC. On the 28th March Called On the Nation to Mourn the death of these victims. It is reported that it was a success in that about 95% in Cape Town, Blacks didn't go to work; 85-90% in Johannesburg, 20-25% in Port Elizabeth, Durban and Pietermaritzburg. In the Vereeniging industrial centre fifty miles South of Johannesburg people didn't go to work. But we are told traditionally that Fear was not heavily affected in that most of its work force were migrant workers who stayed in Kwa-madela and Kwa-manja hostels, went to work.

7. POSKIND, SOBUKWE AND APARTHEID, p 144.

8. POSKIND, SOBUKWE AND APARTHEID, p 142.

at Vereeniging Refractories known as bricks and tiles at that time was also little affected; for it did also had its compounds near the place of work. Most industries were heavily affected by this stay away called by the ANC. The ANC in this regard had succeeded in using the work force to demonstrate anger of the African people. But this militant action of ANC was met with more harsh conditions and state of affairs.

We should remember that just after Sharpeville in the afternoon the Prime Minister F.H. Verwoerd gave a speech in Parliament. He said that it was about 20 000 people in Sharpeville and policemen at the area were few and the crowd hostile on them. As he said some people among the crowd had guns and shot at the police who then counter attacked by answering with fire also.<sup>9</sup>

Now with the 28 March<sup>as</sup> day of mourning called by the ANC, the government resorted to another harsh measures. A state of emergency was called on most parts of the country.<sup>10</sup> Under this state of

9. POGGEND, SOBUKWE AND APARTHEID, p 135.

10. POGGEND, SOBUKWE AND APARTHEID, p 144.



Emergency regulations many Africans were arrested. Many leaders of the PAC were arrested but Robertus's plan was that not all leaders should await themselves for arrest, other should stay behind so as to keep the organisation going. Among these leader PK Leballo was one of them. Leballo was later released and went to Keweenaw where he formed Pogo. This movement was said to have had most supporters among Capetownians youth at the townships of Langa and Nyanga. Leballo might have made a mistake by calling on Pogo members to kill whites on the same day that Robertus was to be released from jail. Thus this hampered his chances and he was sent to Robben Island. This was contrary to Robertus's idea, who wanted not to confront the government in any physical protest.

While this was happening on the ranks of the PAC, the ANC also its leaders were jailed.

Amongst them Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others. After the Rivonia trial Mandela and Sisulu were given life imprisonment while OR Tambo had gone out of the country to build the ANC outside the borders of S.A. All this came as a result that both ANC and PAC were banned. But before Mandela was jailed

11. JOHNS AND DAVIS, MANDELA, TAMBO AND THE ANC, p 89.

He went to Addis Ababa to the conference of the Pan African Freedom Movement for east and Central Africa in 1962, to search for support, military training for young men of the newly formed ANC arm wing, unknown to us hitherto; formed in 1960. Upon his return to S.A he was arrested for living the country without the passport. But he was sure of the support of the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and UN (United Nations Organisation) who were against the way the regime had handled the Sharpsville crisis.<sup>12</sup>

The UN Security Council blamed the racial countries policies for all the killings in S.A. This call for the boycott of S.A goods was called in the UN conference and the newly formed The African Trade Union Federation.<sup>13</sup> Both local and international pressure was visible. In London for example on the conference of the Commonwealth of Nations of which S.A was still a member, the South African representative Eric Louw was named the murderer by the crowd outside the conference room.<sup>14</sup>

With the banning of the PAC and ANC and  
12. JOHNS AND DAVIS, MANDELA, TAMBO AND THE ANC, p 94.

13. POGGEND, SOBUKWE AND APARTHEID, p 160.

14 POGGEND, SOBUKWE AND APARTHEID, p 158.

The aftermath of Sharpeville caused a panic in ruling circles. Which resulted in USA, Britain and other powers expelling S.A from the UN or recommended that S.A not be part of the UN. ~~White~~ <sup>South</sup> Africa was also excluded from the British commonwealth of Nations. Sanctions were thus applied to S.A, oil and arms embargo. S.A products, fruits, wine and other products were boycotted in the ~~International~~ international markets. Sharpeville has thus changed the history of S.A.

In conclusion the S.A government racial laws are to be blamed for Sharpeville, the pass laws, Group areas act, Bantu stand policies; the Uthuk's representation and land acts. All this laws caused the Africans to revolt against the humiliating laws and Sharpeville and larger was the result. Many people were killed and others jailed. Organisation were banned and state of emergency called and later lifted which resulted in more arrest, killing and resistance on the side of the Africans. Conditions in S.A thus changed and this racial laws and banning of organisation caused political instability and thus a result was the fall of the economy. Both political and economic disorders were fuelled further by UN and OAU sanctions on S.A. Thus Sharpeville was the turning point and alteration of South African history, with the emergence of A.P.R.A and Umkhonto.

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65

has good  
description - at  
normal overall  
context. More  
attention will have  
been paid to  
internal issues with-  
white power structure  
& within white society.  
Not a good  
discussion of this  
topic.

## APPENDIX G :

ELL103 S Essays

Turnelo, Carol + Robert.

(including marks + comments  
of researcher + ELL103 teacher)

University of Cape Town

# ① Turnelo

## The English Language at UCT

English department at UCT has Variety taste of academic discourse, starting from written till spoken discourse. This variety manifest itself in the English bridging course, called introduction to English. This bridging course is characterised by three aspects, Language; literature and poetry of which the latter is the personal favourite to me.

①<sup>12</sup> R One need not to forget that English is the second language to this young man. When he came to U he had a vision. His dream was to express himself well in English and to improve in written academic discourse, not forgetting listening skills and good analogy of academic discourse. His dream became a reality when he made head on, with English. Let's take a tour to explore his experience.

At first the course seemed to be poorly structured that led to boredom, to the point that he wanted to quit. But as there is a saying that says, perseverance is the mother of success; he continued with it till this day. The fruits of his perseverance is clearly seen in his development in writing skills, analysis of documents and listening skills. Although he seem to enjoy the course lately but he is still not satisfied with the format or structure of the course in general.

Teacher? Even though English has enriched his mind. He still feels that more could be done to improve it out-look, for to him, it still is a kind of replica of ASP. Improvements could lead to high attendance and there will be no need for registers to be marked daily.

# ① Tanelo

TOHEFSON captures many aspects concerning language as a component that empowers one to reach new heights. We will thus in this essay try to capture some of the argument he rise about English as a strong factor that influence education opportunities. Focusing our attention at what education plays in ones life, using TOHEFSONS case studies and points he rises from his writing.

TOHEFSON argues that education is the key to unlock doors of employment. He does this by giving us a case study of a Namibian boy Xuma, who father is on high ranking positions in Namibia (TOHEFSON 1991). In this case study Xuma is advised by his dad to be educated so as to get employment. Xumas parents see the need of their child to study both English and Afrikaans because to have employment English is a prerequisite in Namibian civil services and most industries are controlled by Afrikaners as Namibia was part of S.A. This most employment require Afrikaans for jobs. It is in this regard that Namibian education is predominant English. English thus is a form of media of instruction for Namibians and it shapes their education preparing them for work which is an ultimate goal for education.

English therefore is a component that is used to shape ones education because of its historical background. Because of its heavy influence it shapes this education and determines its destiny.

# ① Tundo

Comparing the two registers, I would first start with the language, then format and capture the style. Starting firstly with the register (a). In this register we find that a fairly reasonable language is used. It is not too less and its format or style is not of an academic discourse. It is not of an academic discourse in that it is a personal account of the writer. The writer of this register has <sup>referred to himself</sup> use his name as a third person. He further has use the pronoun (he) more than twice which qualifies the argument that this is a personal account. Less or no reference is made in this regard. There are no references for the essay only. Say what the creator of the register had to say and did use anybody's ideas so he need not have to reference. A confused sentence.

SS While register (b) has a more formal kind of style. The writer has used Tolstoy's argument to back up his own argument. The language is more or less of the academic standard. There is no personal account given, even though he used at once to capture the objection of the argument. He used (he) this we suggest that he has taken up a position within the essay identifying with Tolstoy's point of view. Tolstoy in this regard was used to make the argument historically and academically acceptable.

The two differ in context in that (a) is a personal account and (b) is an academic register.



(c) 70  
A) Being a second language English speaker, I had my feelings of coming to UCT, <sup>where</sup> ~~which~~ medium of instruction is dominantly English. I had other choices, but choose UCT because of its prestigious and academic associations. At first I did not found that an obstacle, but I was soon disillusioned.

reg. out?  
The EAP course which is established to help students from poor educational backgrounds with English proficiency, I found thought to be very intimidating and discriminating. It felt that I was unfairly judged just because I speak English as a second language. I wrote the PTEEP test, passed it, but after careful consideration decided to continue with EAP, because I knew I had the need to improve my written and communicative English. EAP helped me to overcome my shyness to speak English, I think that <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ my real problem, the ability to speak English fluently and confidently.

come long?  
What I found really disturbing at UCT is the fact that every written register is pure English. And more strangely that everyone tends to speak English, rather than their mother tongue. For example in my Afrikaans course students speak English although they are Afrikaans speaking. Another instance was when I showed home from cap campus and spoke Afrikaans. A few students passed and actually stood still and stared at me. Was it because they were heard Afrikaans or that they thought 'a-ha another victim of the apartheid regime?' In any case from the start of the year until now my English proficiency has improved, both in my academic work and socially. It is largely due to the aid of EAP and ECLOS.

I now know the importance of English as a language, especially at UCT. It is the gate to employment, education and personal relations. English caused me a lot of heartache and anger, but ultimately it is for the best. reg.

## ② CAROL

presumption

B) In the article of Tellefson it is argued how English <sup>as a language</sup> serves as both a educational stimulant and handicap. In the article it is stated that why English is Afrikaans should be Namibia's national language. In the first instance English is only spoken by white Namibians and Afrikaans has negative social associations. The article also reveals the importance the S.A. government has played in <sup>still</sup> ~~difficult~~ the speaking of the indigenous languages such as Oshiwambo. A strong argument in the article is that English is the gateway to employment and education, but that only a few Namibians may acquire it while others would not. Similarly SWAPO's policy only rates for English proficient to hold posts in decision making while others remain illiterate and disadvantaged.

Further the above mentioned argument is continued, but now it is focused on the role of the government. The government will play an important role in language policies. In this the state can also dictate who has access to paid positions. The article also reveals the explosion in language teaching, but still millions fail to acquire the language they need to survive. The reason is not so much the inadequate facilities but the coercive political <sup>reg-</sup> forces. Furthermore the article states that the modern society creates and destroys opportunities through their language policies. Overall the book (of which the article is an extract) will focus on how language planning is responsible for economic and social inequality.

close.

Lastly the article shows the clear relationship of education with economic class. People with a higher level of education will earn higher salaries. Language of states determines who will complete what level of education. Similarly outside education nation language serves the same purpose. A border of a country must speak the national language. In that way language becomes

## ② CAROL

a selective factor, only choosing the proficient and cutting off the rest of the people. Thus it can be said that national languages which restrict access to decision making is an ideological. ✓ excellent summary.

C) In article A, the autobiographical reproduction, it can be said that it is more personal than B. Features such as the autobiographical pronoun "I", the tense and the type of evidence which is on an experience corroborate the idea that A is personal. Furthermore the text is in the active ✓ form which gives us an idea of immediacy. There is also no strong level of formality. The text is easy readily expected that it is directed to peer UCT students & staff. & Also the structure is very particular, it tells of events that is recent and which is continuing. The writer does not wish to generalise the ideas. The use of "I" also gives a sense of subjectiveness and the writer is writing to an audience <sup>within</sup> familiar ~~area~~ with UCT. Example the words such as EAP, PEEP and ECCOPS. ✓ shared know.

Article B on the other hand is very impersonal. The author ~~not~~ wishes not to give his own view. He is writing from a subjective objectives views. (He uses pronouns such as "it says that", i.e. not himself.) Not the author, but the text comment on the ideas. ?

Here we have an implicit author/speaker. Further he uses case-studies to view his opinions and moves from the particular to the general (Namibian issues to wider global issues). The voice of the author is passive which gives a sense of distance. The author is also reliant on other people's viewpoints. (he quotes O'Callaghan.) His views are researched rather than commenting. Similarly to article A, the author is writing to his peer academics by using jargon such as "lingua franca". (Tollu) is subtly using his article as a medium to ✓ improve his views.

### ③ ROBERT

#### A Personal Experience of English Language at UCT

Since I am from a DET school, things were not easy for me when I just arrived at UCT, referring specifically at the use of English language in lectures and socially. At school English was never a problem although all subjects were conducted in it (Standard 6-10). If anyone in class did not understand anything, could ask for explanation in Sotho, but that is not possible at UCT.

At first I struggled with notes taking because I had to battle with accent of white lectures, they spoke very fast and I couldn't make out their pronunciation. Basically lectures were useless to me because I couldn't write any notes nor could I understand anything that has been said. The problem wasn't just listening and understanding but it was also about expressing myself. I could not speak fluently, therefore I became withdrawn even in tutorials.

The problem of expressing myself did not end in lectures, tutorials or socially but even when writing an essay. Even when I understood the topic and task, I could not present my argument in a clear way. Poor skills in English language cost me almost all my tests and assignments last semester, but now that I have been at UCT for sometime, I am used to English language. The more one use English language the more fluent one becomes.

acquisition

B →

B. Outline of Tollefson's argument

Tollefson argues that the policy of three separate educational systems for whites, "coloureds" and blacks have isolated local languages so that they are not used for inter-group communication. He focused mostly on language policy in Namibia, where English has come to be seen as the language of liberation. Yet opportunities for learning it are very limited. He went on to say that the disadvantage of using English in daily communication is that English-speakers will have significant advantages over non-English-speakers in education and employment.

Tollefson regards SWAPO's adoption of English as probably the best policy for reducing inequality based on language. However, he argues that for those who cannot speak English (like Tjivo and Sam), it remains a barrier to their education, employment and political participation. He said that language acquisition results from the immediate need to communicate and from actual use of the language, and English is typically acquired in school (except in countries which use English - English-speakers).

He saw the shift to school-based language learning as a worldwide phenomenon and said that language policy plays an important role in the structure of power and inequality throughout the world. According to Tollefson, explosion in business language teaching has led to hundreds of programmes to prepare language teachers. However he says that more people than ever are unable to acquire language skills they

③ Robert

need to enter and succeed in school and participate politically and socially. He says that his book investigates the reasons for failure of millions to speak the language <sup>that</sup> they need to survive. He went on to say that inadequate language competence is not due to poor texts and materials, learners' low motivation or other explanations given. Instead language competence remains a barrier to education.

Finally, Tolleson argues that language education is the key to understand many aspects of social organisation and language is one criterion for determining which people will complete different levels of education.

C →

C.

Comparison between A & B

Article A was written for say maybe someone who was concerned about the writer's performance at UCT, but obviously the reader appears to be unaware of the situation at DEI schools (That it is possible to ask for explanation in one's home language, although that subject is conducted in English). That is why the writer provided a brief explanation, to give some background. I believe that someone from DEI school should know about that kind of situation, therefore it would not have been necessary for the writer to give such an example. (Since that should be obvious).

Secondly, I would argue that article A is very personal. Since the writer is talking about himself and his personal experience, for example: "I am from ---", "--- not easy for me --", "I struggled ---", "I could not speak fluently", and many others. The presence or use of I and me refers directly to the writer, moreover the message of this register is centered personally to the writer.

In contrast to article A, article B was written for a large number of people, more especially those who are interested in politics, focusing specifically at Namibia's new policy of education. These can as well be people who want to know the role or importance of language in academic life. It is stated clearly that the article focused mostly at language policy in Namibia. Political concern is shown by the use of words such as "policy", "separate educational system"

③ Robert.

"language of liberation", "SWAPO" which is the ruling party in Namibia. The article stated clearly that language can be a barrier to education, employment, political participation, it went over to use Tshivenda and San as example (of those who might not benefit from this move).

Article B differs again from A in that it is not personal. The writer of article B is only passing someone's message (Tollefson's) without involving himself. The impersonality of B is shown by the fact that its writer pointed straightaway that "Tollefson argues ---" (first sentence) "He argues ---", "He went on to say ---". The use of "He" which indicate third person, shows that the writer is not presenting his own thoughts or argument.

The other difference between the two texts is that A is based solely in personal experience of the very writer himself, whereas B is absolutely not personal experience not of the writer of the article nor even of the original writer of the book (Tollefson himself) but it is based primarily on some kind of research and happenings somewhere.

END